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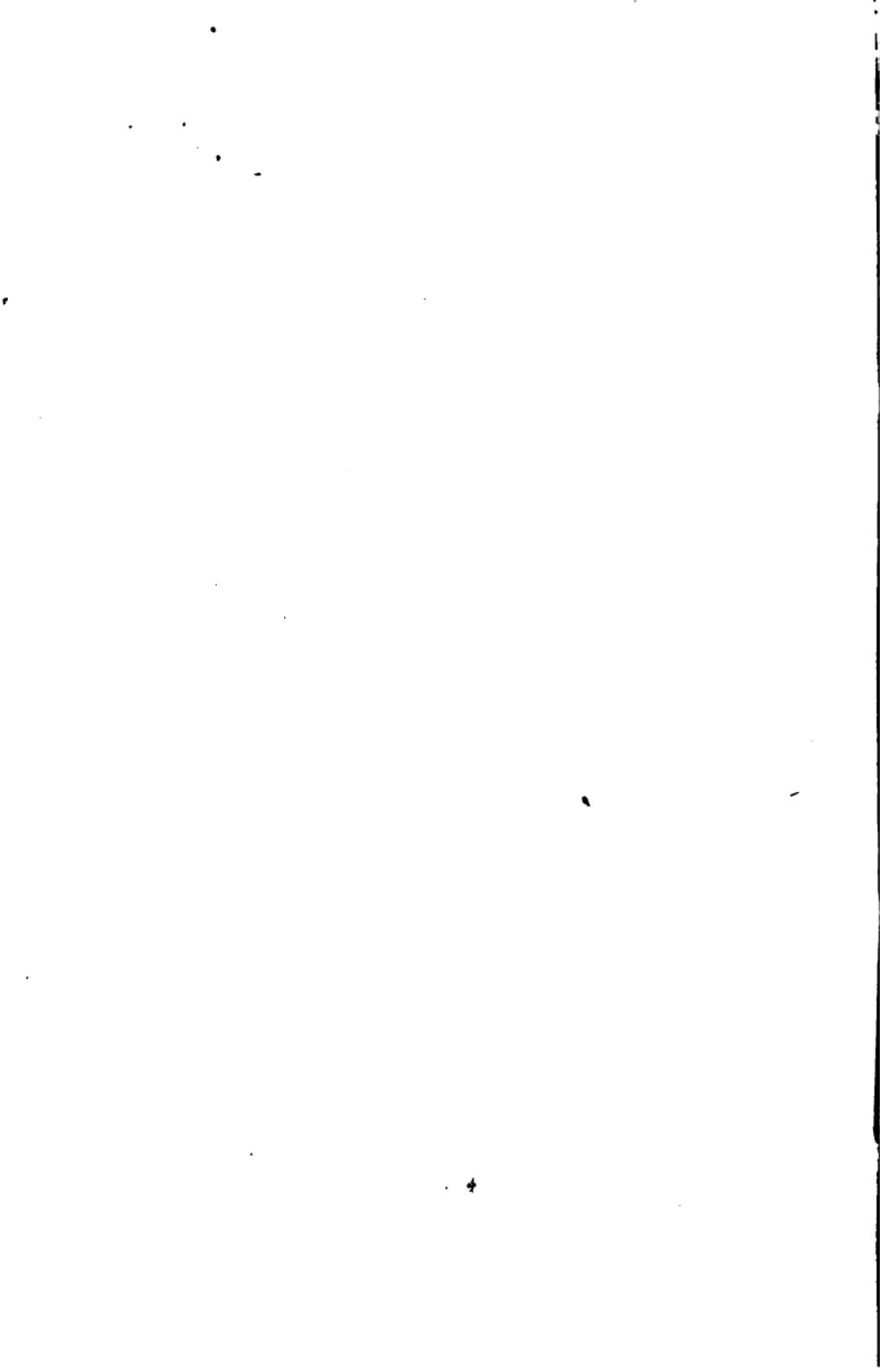


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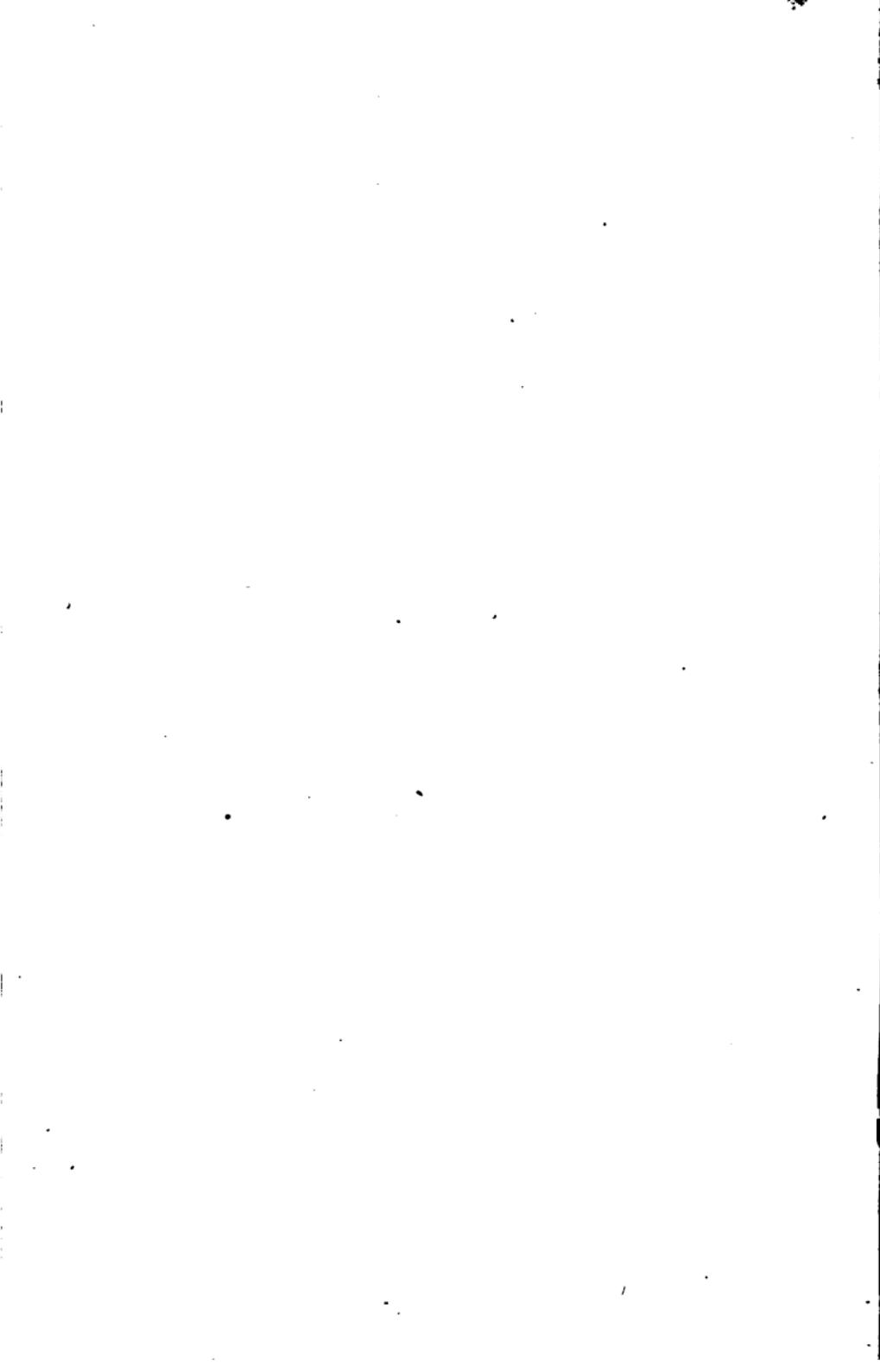
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Madelina and Beatrice,—chap. 8.

The Virgin Strider;

STRUGGLES AFTER HOLINESS.

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MRS. MABELLA L. LESLIE.

AUTHOR OF "TIM THE SCISSOR-OPINER," "SEQUEL TO
TIM," ETC., ETC.

BOSTON:
HENRY HOYT,
No. 9 Cornhill.

1852.



The Organ Grinder:

OR,

STRUGGLES AFTER HOLINESS.

BY

MRS. MADELINE LESLIE,

AUTHOR OF "TIM THE SCISSORS GRINDER," "SEQUEL TO
TIM," ETC., ETC.



BOSTON:
HENRY HOYT,
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THE
ORGAN GRINDER.

CHAPTER I.

THE ITALIAN HOME.

“ **A**NTONIO ! Antonio ! I will go with you.
Stop, Antonio ! ”

The young organ grinder moved reluctantly on, casting his eyes back every now and then to watch the group at the door. He soon turned from the narrow, filthy court, and his form was lost to their view.

“ There, he’s gone for to-day ! ” cried a woman, who, with an infant in her arms, and another clinging to her dress, had watched his disappearance.

Beatrice threw herself passionately on the floor of the filthy hall and began to scream with all the strength her lungs would allow.

The woman, who was her mother, laughed, and saying in Italian, which was the only language she could speak, "come Silvio," raising him also in her arms, and toiling up two flights of the narrow stairs, entered the small room which she denominated home.

Madelina, twin sister to Beatrice, for a long time tried in vain to soothe her, but at last the loud crying ceased; and hand in hand they wandered out from the court into the wider street. The familiar notes of a hand organ attracted them, they ran hastily on, their uncombed tresses waving in the breeze. But it was not Antonio. It was a man who lived in a room near their own, and who, in an angry tone assumed to frighten them into obedience, exclaimed, "Go home! go home! or you'll catch it."

The children were too well accustomed to harsh words and rough voices to heed them;

the warm sunlight shone on them so pleasantly and the air was so soft, they would not return to the close, stifling atmosphere of the court. Still clasping one another by the hand, they ran gaily up and down the street, which, at this early hour was nearly empty, laughing and shouting with delight.

While they are thus enjoying themselves, let us follow their mother to her tenement.

This consisted of a room ten by twelve feet ; out of which a small bed-room, or more properly a large closet opened. Upon the floor of the latter, an old straw mattress was covered with the apology for a quilt, but which in reality was a faded skirt torn in the back seam.

In the main apartment a decent bedstead stood in one corner in dangerous proximity to a cooking stove ; a table literally covered with dishes, scraps of food, an old lamp, children's clothes, a greasy spider, a pair of old shoes, and other articles too numerous to mention, was pushed against the wall opposite the bed, while three wooden chairs and two small cradles, oc-

cupied most of the vacant space in the centre of the floor.

From large nails driven into the plastering around the walls were suspended various old garments, cooking utensils, two handirons, a string of onions, and a basket stuffed with old rubbish. Here lived Andrew Ritti, the organ grinder, his wife and five children.

Madelina and Beatrice were just six years old. Leonora, or Nora as she was called, was nearly four, while a pair of twin boys named Maurice and Silvio were still occupants of the cradles.

Andrea Ritti had come to America when Leonora was an infant of a few months. He was at that time in a much better situation than most of the emigrants who reach our shores, for he brought with him a small bag of gold pieces, avails of the sale of the small vine-covered cottage, bequeathed his wife by her parents

It was with great difficulty Lizette could be persuaded to leave the land of her nativity,

even to behold the great eldorado of the West, where so many of her countrymen and country-women had preceded her.

But Andrea had not listened in vain to the glowing accounts of his neighbors respecting the glories of the new world. His ambitious spirit caught fire at the idea of liberty and plenty ; and fuel was added to the flame by vivid representations from his own brothers, that with the sum realized from the sale of the cottage, he might speedily become a rich man in America.

The only argument which had any weight with Lizette was the fact so often dwelt upon by her husband, that in the land he had chosen, and which seemed indeed to him like the land of promise, their little girls would be taught to read and write. These accomplishments which she had sighed for in vain, seemed to the poor woman like a vast triumph over the stinted acquirements of her own youth. Perhaps she might have been contented that they should pass their lives as she had done, in the simple

labors of a cottage home, ending the day by a dance with her companions on the village green ; but an accidental circumstance had taught her that there was something higher to be desired.

A young girl called Genevieve, daughter of a nobleman by the name of Guise, falling sick, her parents had been advised by their physician to send her to a retired farm with the hope that the frugal but healthy diet and the pure country air might invigorate her failing energies. The neat, tasteful cottage of Lizette's parents attracted them, and the invalid girl became henceforth the companion of the light-hearted Italian maiden.

For a long time, books, of which Genevieve was passionately fond, were prohibited, lest her devotion to them should keep her within doors ; but as she gained strength her parents yielded to her entreaties ; and after this, many hours of every day were passed by the two girls sitting in a rustic bower under the shade of the luxurious vines. Here Lizette's fingers flew nimbly over her bobbin frame, her mind

drinking in large draughts of enjoyment as she listened with absorbed interest to sonnets from Burchiello, or plays from the dramatists Dante and Poliziano.

Her imagination fired by the scenes passing thus rapidly before her ; it seemed as if a new sense had been created, a well-spring of rapture in comparison with which all her former delights appeared tame and spiritless.

Genevieve's recall to her home quickly followed the news of her restoration to health, and poor Lizette was left behind to mourn over the loss of the most delicious enjoyment it had yet been her fortune to know.

Her early betrothal to Andrea, universally acknowledged to be the handsomest, and gayest youth of the village, only in part restored her spirits. Henceforth the accomplishment of being able to read was associated in her mind with the highest enjoyment. No wonder, then, that Andrea was ever repeating to her that in America even the poorest children might surpass the princes of their own country in knowledge.

On the passage from Florence to New York, the wonderful beauty of the twin girls was often commented upon until their mother, weaving into their future destiny the vague remembrance of the heroines of the plays to which she had listened with so much rapture, built airy castles of their brilliant success when they entered upon the stage of life.

Maurice Ritti, Andrea's brother, lived in Boston, and the emigrants on landing in New York proceeded at once to take the cars for the former city.

The meeting between the brothers was a cordial one. Indeed, Maurice wept tears of joy, as he clasped his arms about this beloved companion of his boyhood, whom, to satisfy the cravings of his own desolate heart, he had decoyed from home and country. He had hired a small tenement in which they could live together, had purchased a few articles of the most common furniture, and now, with many sad misgivings, hastened to collect their baggage, place it in the hand cart he had provided, and proceed

them to what was now to be their home. Walking through a narrow alley out of North Street, Andrea and Lizette found themselves in a court shut out from the rest of the world, where the Italians form a communion by themselves. This court was seven feet in width, about one hundred in length, lined by continuous blocks of houses. It was paved, the ~~only~~ ornament being an old pump which stood in the centre for the accommodation of all the families. It is scarcely necessary to add that as the ends of the court were enclosed by a high board fence the sun seldom penetrated it, and that the air was heavy and stifling.

It was well known to every member of this community that our emigrants were expected by the vessel which had just landed in New York, so that they no sooner made their appearance in the court than a crowd of women and children rushed from the houses, the men being abroad with their organs ; and extended their rough, but hearty greetings to the new-comers, eager to hear the last news from their beloved homes.

Lizette, wearied with her long journey, tried in vain to control her emotions on finding herself so differently situated from what she had imagined. A flood of tears mingled with her first words of answer to their earnest welcome, and she followed her husband up the steep stairs to their room we have already described, her heart sinking with sad forebodings.

CHAPTER II.

ANTONIO'S EARLY LIFE.

PASSING over several months which were mostly spent by Lizette in weeping over the loss of their sweet Italian home, trebly dear by contrast with their present abode ; and by Andrea in constant and often angry expostulations with his brother at the deception he had practised to lure them to America, we come to the time when the arrival of a near neighbor from Italy turned the current of their thoughts, and rendered them more contented with their present situation. ♦

This was no other than Marietta Lambert and her son Antonio, who were plunged into the deepest grief and despondency by the death of her husband and his father on the voyage. Indeed, Marietta had scarcely reached her friends, before she died of a broken heart, hav-

ing confided with her last breath her darling son to the care of Lizette.

The expense of her interment was paid by the city ; Maurice and Andrea Ritti, leading the orphan Antonio, alone following the poor mourner to her last resting place.

Heretofore Lizette had bewailed her situation as unendurable, but the terrible affliction of Marietta caused her to reflect that a worse sorrow might await her. Though deprived of her fondly cherished home, her husband and children were still left ; the latter were unusually robust and healthy.

The continual complaints and reproaches had for the time weaned Andrea's affection from her, but the sad affliction of their friend, ending so suddenly in the loss of her life, drew them together. Then he cheered her and reanimated her hopes by the promise to return to Italy as soon as he could earn enough to buy back their pretty cottage, and for the first time since they reached Boston had the happiness of seeing her eyes beam and her cheeks dimple with pleasure.

Antonio was a quiet, reserved child. He had scarcely attained his twelfth summer when his mother was taken from him, and for a time was so wholly overcome by his loss that nothing could arouse him. The winning fondness of Madelina and Beatrice at last accomplished what his older friends had given up as useless. Smiles once more returned to his countenance, and words of fond endearment were often heard from his lips.

As the twins grew older the difference in their dispositions became more perceptible. Madelina was mild and yielding, while Beatrice was fiery, impetuous and somewhat obstinate. They were both of them exceedingly affectionate, and soon lavished the whole wealth of their little hearts upon their attentive young companion.

Antonio, in company with Maurice and half a dozen other men, occupied a room at night in the next story above his friends, but his meals were usually taken with them. His services were early required to pick up coal for the day

from the barrels of cinders placed for the poor at the back doors of dwellings lining the alleys. Often too he found pieces of cold biscuit, scraps of meat, or fish thrown into a paper and laid on the top of a barrel. Hunger sometimes compelled him to secure any scraps of food that were lying in the gutters. These he invariably carried to his home in North street to share with his young companions.

From watching for his return at the door, the twins at length returned down the steps and ran back and forth upon the smooth pavement. Sometimes they crept softly into the alley and listened eagerly for his footsteps. Whenever he returned he was sure of a glad welcome.

Though necessarily exposed to many hardships, Antonio grew large and strong, so that, in his sixteenth year, Andrea, who owned several organs, let him one on easy terms, and fairly started him in his business of organ grinding.

The boy was exceedingly fond of music, and

as his instrument was a good one, set to play several popular and lively airs, he passed the first day in high spirits. His cheerful, open countenance attracted much attention, and many were the tiny silver pieces dropped into his hand. At noon a plate full of well cooked food was brought him by a young girl, as a return for the pretty tunes he had played her.

As yet he could speak but few English words, but the graceful bow, and the earnest "tank miss," with which, having set down his organ, he received the plate from her hand, interested both her and her mother, and led them to wish to know something more of his history. There were two sweet potatoes upon the plate, and the child, who stood watching, wondered not a little to see him, after one taste, make a motion of delight, and with an appealing glance into her face, put them into his pocket, his tongue rolling off a perfect volley of unintelligible sounds.

The child laughed and blushed, but could not understand what he wished to tell her.

He at length returned the plate with anoth-

er bow and many repetitions of the words, "tank miss," then replacing the broad strap over his shoulder, was about to give her a parting tune, when the lady came to the door, and motioned him to stop.

She did not understand Italian, but she spoke French readily, so that by the similarity of words and the help of natural signs, she learned that he was an orphan, not many years in the country, and that he had saved the best part of his dinner for some young friends to whom he was much attached.

Pointing to the child before him, and then lowering his hand, he signified that Madelina and Beatrice were shorter and younger than she, while his bright, beaming face and animated gestures, as he fondly repeated their names, proved that he loved them tenderly.

A few rapid sentences passed between the lady and her daughter, and then the little girl ran into the house, from which she soon returned with her apron full of apples, which, with some little difficulty, she gave him to understand she wished to send to his young friends.

His earnest, cordial, "tank miss, tank," spreading his arms, and bowing, to show that he was greatly pleased, together with the delight which beamed in every feature, amply repaid both the lady and her child. After another tune they bowed him adieu, inviting him by signs, to come again, neither they nor he at all realizing the important advantages which would be reaped by him from this and subsequent visits.

On his return home at a late hour, flushed with success, he was sadly disappointed to find that Madelina and Beatrice, wearied with their long watching, had fallen asleep on their pallet of straw. Lizette listened with interest to his voluble account, until Silvio, one of the twin babies, began to cry so loudly that she was obliged to give him her whole attention.

The next morning Antonio returned with Andrea from his search after coal before the little girls were awake, and soon gave them such a glowing account of his adventures, that they began to tease their mother to allow them

to accompany him. But she would not consent.

Beatrice became so angry that she threw herself down and began to beat her head against the floor, while her sister screamed with all her might.

Neither Andrea nor his wife realized the importance of teaching their children to control their anger, or, indeed, of teaching them anything. On the present occasion, the father only laughed, as he turned to his wife with the question, "why not ? "

"They are too young," was her brief reply.

At night when Andrea returned home, he brought two tamborines, and began to teach the little girls to use them. Every evening for a week he made them practise striking the tamborines with their fingers, until they could make quite a pretty accompaniment to his organ.

Then he urged Lizette to allow them to accompany Antonio, prophesying that their extreme youth and beauty would attract atten-

tion to them, and make their business very profitable.

For several weeks, however, he urged in vain. Four years in that contracted apartment, struggling, though with fainter and fainter hope of success, for means to return to her native land, had done much toward bringing down her pride. In her youth she had been called the fairest and bonniest lass of the village, but now her beauty had all faded and gone. Her only pride was in her children, her only hope was for them.

Many times in a day she turned from her wearisome employments to gaze upon their large, lustrous eyes, the rich bloom upon their cheeks, their dark hair waving in natural curls over their foreheads, and sighed as she recollected that thus far the airy castles she had built for them, had fallen to the ground. Schools there were, indeed, in every ward in the city ; but how could her children reap advantage from them, when they knew not a word of the English language.

She was complaining one evening to her husband of this, when her attention was arrested by hearing Antonio pronounce strange words, which he told the children to repeat after him.

The boy was exceedingly anxious to learn English, and when he heard the name of any object, repeated it over and over until he had fastened it upon his memory.

Both Andrea and Lizette were delighted with their childrens' success in imitating the harsh sounds, and when Antonio began to plead that if they were allowed to go into the street with him, they would soon learn to talk and understand the language of the country, she no longer withheld her consent.

But the next morning when the boy alluded to her promise, and wished them to be ready for an early start, she urged that she must have time to prepare suitable clothes, and he reluctantly left the court, as described in the opening scene of our story.

CHAPTER III.

MADELINA AND BEATRICE.

A FEW days later, on a beautiful morning in May, Madelina and Beatrice, holding each other firmly by the hand, with their tamborines tightly clasped in the other, gaily danced down the court, through the dark alley, and out into the street, closely following the footsteps of their older companion.

“Are you going to take us to see the good lady?” inquired Madelina, pressing nearer to Antonio.

“Yes,” he answered with a warm smile, “but not at this hour. She has not eaten her breakfast yet. I am going a long distance first, but you will not be tired, for there is no end of the beautiful things I shall show you.”

Beatrice began to dance with delight. “I’ll

go every day, with you, Antonio. I'll never stay in that dark, dirty court, again."

They went up through Hanover street to Tremont, and from thence to the Common, only stopping once, when a lady, holding an infant in her arms, knocked on the window for them to give her a tune.

The twins were rosy with blushes at this first display of their musical abilities; but the lady bowed her approval, while the baby clapped its tiny hands with delight.

When they had finished, she sent out five cents for Antonio, and a few coppers for each of the little girls.

When they reached the Common, the children were wild with joy. They danced upon the green grass, keeping time to the music of their tamborines, as they had been taught by their mother, and flew to the edge of the pond, until their companion feared he should lose all control over them. Indeed, after staying here more than an hour, it was with difficulty he could persuade them to leave, and then only

when he assured them the young girl who sent them the apples would have started for school, unless they went directly.

Antonio had been to play for Mrs. Murray, in Mount Vernon street, but once since his first interview with her ; then she expressed her pleasure that he was trying to learn English.

She was truly much interested in the enthusiastic boy, and hoped, when he could understand her, to persuade him to attend a Mission Sabbath School with which she was connected.

They all were sadly disappointed to find that no one came to the door or window, though they played their prettiest tunes, and at last were obliged to leave without having seen either the lady or her daughter. At noon they had only received fifteen cents, and the twins began to cry from hunger and weariness.

Antonio was grinding his organ in front of a handsome house, where several children with their nurse, were gazing from the window, when a company of school children came dancing toward him, causing Madelina and Beatrice to press closer to his side.

"Oh, here's our organ boy!" cried out a pleasant voice. "He plays real pretty tunes, and I do believe," she added, after an eager gaze at his companions, "that those are the little girls he told us about. I mean to ask them to go right over to our house."

Antonio recognized her voice at once, though she spoke so rapidly, he could scarcely understand a word. He was sure she felt as friendly as ever, from the pretty flush of animation on her cheek, and her pleasant smile, as he bowed his salutation.

"I want you to go home with me," said Ida, pitching her voice high and loud, with the idea he could better understand her.

The lad smiled and bowed again, but evidently did not know what she had said.

"Isn't it too bad, I can't make him understand me?" exclaimed the child, turning to her companions.

At this moment a servant came from the house, and dropped a piece of silver into his hand. Then holding out a plate of crackers

said, "perhaps your sisters would like something to eat."

Madelina and Beatrice grasped them eagerly, at the same time obeying a glance from Antonio, and repeating the words, "tank, tank, miss."

"They are not his sisters," exclaimed Ida, earnestly, "but he loves them very much."

"Come ! come !" she repeated, taking the hand of Beatrice, and pointing in the direction of her home.

This time he comprehended her meaning.

"Yes, miss ; tank, miss," he replied, covering his organ and preparing to follow her.

As they approached the house, Ida ran forward to announce them to her mother, and was very happy when the lady told her to invite them to the kitchen.

The twins gazed about them in wonder. The bright row of brittania covers, hanging from the walls, the piles of plates, visible through the open door of the closet, the large range, with its blazing fire of coal, from the

oven of which the cook was at that moment taking a joint of meat, the appearance of neatness and plenty, all presented so strong a contrast to their own room at home, that nothing but their shyness prevented them from giving utterance to their delight.

Mrs. Murray was engaged with company ; but she found time to run to the kitchen, and give orders to the cook to add some hot vegetables to the cold meat-left from breakfast, and give to her young friends.

“Aren’t you glad I saw them, mamma ? It was so nice ; I came home through Hancock street,” cried Ida, talking very fast and very earnestly. “I wish, mamma, you’d excuse me from dinner, I’d rather stay with them till they go.”

Mrs. Murray patted the rosy cheek of her daughter, and smiled, as she said, “I will ask them to wait a while and play you a tune.”

Antonio could understand much more readily than when she had first seen him, and could speak several words quite intelligibly. He

cheerfully promised to remain, and allow his young companions to rest while the family were at dinner, and then play for them before he left.

The children had scarcely finished their food when Ida appeared again, bringing a large wax doll in her arms, which she smilingly held before her delighted visitors.

Beatrice opened her eyes to their fullest extent, as the child turned her favorite dolly slowly around, to exhibit its beautiful flaxen curls, and pulled the wire which caused it to open and shut its eyes.

Even the cook laughed heartily at their wonder when Ida put the tiny hands inside the little fur muff, and set dolly upon the table as if for a walk.

"How do you do, Miss Rosa?" she asked, gaily. "Have you come to take tea with me?"

Her clear, musical laugh, sounded through the room, and the twins joined heartily in the sport though not comprehending anything

clearly, except that the beautiful miss was very kind to entertain them so agreeably.

Presently the bell rang for the cook to prepare the pudding and sauce to go up to the dining room, and then the girl who waited on table ran down and up again many times, bringing plates from the first course, and carrying up clean ones with knives, forks and spoons, from a large closet at the foot of the stairs.

All this ceremony was quite new even to Antonio, who began to think it was a great matter for rich people to get through with their dinner.

"Oh, papa, papa," cried Ida, at the top of the stairs, "I do hope you won't have to go away till my organ man has played you a tune. He's done his dinner, and I'll ask him to play right away; and such pretty little tambourine girls, too. Oh, papa, I wish I could be a tambourine girl!"

Our young friends were soon at their stand in front of the house, the gentleman sitting at

the window, with his daughter's arm clasped tightly around his neck.

They had played nearly fifteen minutes, when he said with a laugh, "run, child, and give them this dime. It's worth that to see those little creatures dance to their tambourines."

"And sha'n't I give the little girls anything, then?"

"You're a real pick-pocket, Ida. Why, I thought you had paid them by their dinner."

She turned entreatingly to her mother, who only smiled.

"Why, papa," she cried, her chin beginning to quiver, "when I'm a tambourine girl, sha'n't you want people to give me something to buy my dresses and shoes with?"

"There's the golden rule for you in earnest," shouted Mr. Murray, with an arch glance at his wife.

"Well, miss," he added, holding out his hand in which there were several pieces of silver, "help yourself, only you must tell your

friends not to come here very often. I can't afford such expensive music."

She saw now that he was joking, and saying with a smile, "Oh, what a funny papa!" ran gaily down the steps, to put the money into Antonio's hand.

Mr. Murray was looking from the window, and to his surprise, the lad refused to take it from her.

"No, no, miss!" he said, "tank, miss; no, no! gude diener!" meaning that he had already been paid by the good dinner.

Ida was much distressed, and tried to force the money into Madelina's hand, but Antonio talked very fast and earnestly to her, and she replied by shaking her head.

"A strange lad," said the gentleman, throwing open the sash.

"He won't take it, papa," said Ida, in a sad tone.

"Well, never mind; you shall save it for him, and give it to him the next time he comes."

CHAPTER IV.

INVITATION TO SUNDAY SCHOOL.

THIE next morning the rain poured in torrents, so that Antonio did not venture out with his organ but toward noon the clouds broke away, and hastily eating some bits of broken bread, he set forth on his round.

The twins begged to accompany him, and when Lizette refused, Beatrice stamped her small foot with an outburst of angry tears. Indeed, she cried so loud and so long when the lad had left the house, that her mother, provoked that the noise had awoke the babies, flew into a passion and whipped her severely.

Poor little Madelina meanwhile, sat sobbing behind the door, thinking how much pleasant-er it would be to live in the beautiful house in Mount Vernon street, and have a mother who

would smile pleasantly upon her and pat her cheek with affection.

Nothing that she had witnessed the day before had impressed her so much as the love existing between Ida and her parents. She could not reason upon it; she could only feel that the relation between them, was vastly different from that between herself and her own parents.

Andrea and Lizette were indeed fond and even proud of their children, but the busy cares of life, the constant struggle to find bread to allay the hunger of these little ones, and clothes to cover their slender bodies, and yet lay by what he thought necessary, toward their slowly increasing fund, stinted the growth of ardent affection, or certainly prevented the manifestation of tenderness toward their offspring.

Then they were entirely ignorant of the importance of training these susceptible minds to the honor and service of their Maker. They did not stop to realize that the passions of Be-

atrice or the wilfulness of Leonora grew stronger by indulgence ; that they were seeds of moral disease which must be uprooted, or they would yield a sad harvest of unhappiness, if not of absolute crime.

Lizette, who was naturally of a more ardent nature than her husband, had grown cold and callous, in the tedious routine of her secluded life. The dreams of her childhood had long since faded away from her memory, or were only remembered with a bitter pang of regret. If occasionally a thought of what would be the future of her children, flashed through her mind, she felt that there was nothing before them but poverty and wretchedness.

The afternoon following Antonio's departure was by far the most wearisome the children had ever passed. They had obtained a glance into other scenes, and their own confined, filthy apartment looked ten times more dreary from the contrast.

Toward night, however, they began to talk in an animated manner of the pleasures they

had enjoyed, and soothed by a promise from their mother that they might accompany Antonio to-morrow, if the weather was fine, Beatrice's good nature was restored, and they passed an hour quite happily, in a game of romps with Nora and their baby brothers.

We must now pass over a period of several months.

It is again a rainy day; but Madelina and Beatrice are sitting quietly by each other on the floor, with Nora pressing closely to them, absorbed in examining the highly colored pictures in a book which had been presented them by Ida.

The page is open to a scene where Christ, the Saviour of mankind is hanging on the cross, while the Roman soldier is thrusting a spear into his blessed side. The crown of thorns upon the Saviour's head, the blood trickling from his brow, the look of meek resignation upon his pale countenance, impress the children most deeply. They talk about it

and wonder at the cruelty of the wicked men in subdued tones.

Presently their mother, sitting idly dandling little Maurice, catches a glimpse of the meek sufferer hanging on the accursed tree, and hastily crossing herself, repeats a long forgotten prayer, "Hail, Jesus, son of the blessed virgin; look upon me and bless me."

She snatches the book quickly from the hand of Beatrice, eagerly presses her lips to that pale brow, and then sinks back into a chair, giving way to a passionate burst of sorrow.

With her apron pressed to her eyes, her form is swayed back and forth, in the violence of her grief. She is transported to her own home once more. Again she clasps the hand of her mother, and enters with her the village church. The voice of the aged priest rings in her ears, as pointing to the picture of Christ hanging on the cross, blood flowing from his hands, his feet, his side, he cries, "sinners, that blood was shed for you." Once more she

feels the keen pang of guilt at the thought of her sins, and a determination to be more humble and devout. She weeps afresh as she remembers that for years she has scarcely recalled to mind his cruel death, has scarcely thought of all she owes to his divine love.

Suddenly she dries her tears, and with an expression of firm resolve, which the children have never before seen, but which her countenance now wears, she calls them to her side. Pointing to the picture, she describes the cruelty of the wicked Jews who crucified the Lord. She repeats all that she can remember of the early teaching of her parents, and of the white haired priest. Listening meanwhile in mute astonishment, they see tears flowing from her eyes, and they wipe their own away, wondering at her unusual emotion, and at the fervor with which she frequently makes the sign of the cross on her breast, and presses her lips upon the sacred representation.

At length Beatrice turns one leaf, and says eagerly, pointing to the picture upon it, "Tell us about this, mamma!"

There was a representation of the body of Jesus taken from the cross, the women wringing their hands and weeping over it, Roman soldiers in their gay uniform, standing near, to prevent the lifeless form from being stolen away.

Lizette gazes through her tears, but shakes her head. She can tell them nothing more. Presently, however, she points to the description at the bottom of the page. A new determination is formed in her mind, and she says, in a loud, cheerful tone, "Speak English, and you shall go to school and learn to read."

On another page of the book was a picture of Peter at the Beautiful gate of the temple, healing the lame man who sat there begging alms. On the last a representation of Jesus raising to life the son of the widow of Nain. A bier which has been brought through the gates of the city, now resting on the ground, the multitude thronging about the dead man, arrayed in his winding sheet, sitting upright in answer to the command of his Lord, who stands near, his

hand raised with divine authority, as he utters the solemn, awe-inspiring words, "Young man, I say unto thee, arise."

The twins sat for hours gazing at these scenes, and longing for a description of them, while their mother sat down with her foot on the rocker of Silvio's cradle, to patch a torn, soiled garment, an expression of new resolve upon her countenance, though every now and then a tear falls upon her work.

At length a heavy step ascends the stairs, and Andrea enters the room, bringing some broken food wrapt in a paper, which he throws upon the table.

He is soon followed by Antonio, who is eagerly welcomed by the children, even little Silvio creeping toward him at the sound of his cheerful voice, and trying to pull himself up at his side.

"Go away, Silvio," cried Beatrice, pushing him to the floor, and causing him to scream with disappointment.

"Don't be so ill-natured," exclaimed her father, raising the boy to his lap.

The book of pictures was again brought forward, and the little girls were repeating to Antonio what their mother had told them about the Saviour, when Andrea asked abruptly,

"How much did you get to-day, Antonio?"

"Very little," said the lad, whose mind was evidently absorbed in thought.

Lizette soon distributed the bread to the children, and told them to go to bed; but still Antonio sat, his eyes fixed vacantly upon the open page before him, but his thoughts wandering elsewhere.

In the months that had passed, he had made rapid progress in talking English, so that now he could understand it quite readily, more so than Maurice Ritti, who had been in the country two years longer than Andrea.

He had also taken much pains with Madelina and Beatrice, obliging them to repeat over and over, any English word of which they had learned the meaning. As soon as they had committed it, he insisted that they should use the English instead of the Italian name, always

pretending not to hear them unless they did so.

During this afternoon, he had accidentally met Mrs. Murray in the street, and she had invited him to accompany the twins to Charles street, the next day, which was the Sabbath, where a Sabbath school was kept, promising that if he and they would attend regularly, they should be taught to read.

The lad was at first delighted with the proposal, and had given a ready consent to her invitation, promising to bring the little girls if their mother would permit, but now he repented that he had done so. He was a large boy, and felt ashamed of being so ignorant. More than once during the evening he determined to go to Mount Vernon street, at an early hour, and say to Mrs. Murray that he could not be present.

But what excuse could he give? Certainly he might say that his clothes were too shabby. No, he could not say that; it would seem like begging her for better ones.

Lizette noticed that something troubled the boy, whom she loved as well as her own children, but did not ask him to confide it to her until Andrea was asleep.

He seemed to have been waiting for this, for he did not as usual leave the room when the man threw himself on the bed, but as Lizette still sat at her mending, he said abruptly, "I have promised Mrs. Murray that I will take Madelina and Beatrice to her school to-morrow."

"Well, I'm willing," she replied, fixing her eyes full upon him.

"But I'm so large to begin to learn like a child, and my clothes are so worn and ragged."

Lizette's laugh grated harshly upon his excited nerves.

"You're not likely to be any smaller," she said.

CHAPTER V.

ANTONIO IN THE MISSION SCHOOL.

FOORTUNATELY for our young friends, Mrs. Murray happened to be standing in the entrance to the building, where the Mission school was kept, for Antonio's courage had been oozing away ever since he started from home.

Her countenance brightened when she saw them, and taking each of the twins by the hand, and beckoning Antonio to follow her, she entered through a large door, into the school room, where classes of the older children were sitting in front of their teachers.

The lad blushed deeply as she pointed him to a seat with a class of boys much smaller than himself, and after a few rapid words with the young instructor, left him there, while she passed into a smaller room, with her younger charge.

Here there were about forty girls and boys, both white and colored, sitting on benches, with which the room was lined. They greeted her with smiles and bows of delight, gazing at her young companions with interest and curiosity.

Placing Madelina and Beatrice on the end of the seat near her own, Mrs. Murray called her little school to order, and then repeated with them the Lord's Prayer.

After this exercise, which she was pleased to see had affected her new proteges by its solemnity, they were called to give an account of the last Sabbath's lesson. This happened to be the death of Christ on the cross, and was illustrated by a large card hung from the wall, to which she directed their attention.

The twins noticed at once that this picture was similar to the one in the book Ida had given them, and listened with absorbed interest.

There was much that they could not understand, but the lady's face expressed great sor-

row, and her voice was low and plaintive, as she directed their attention to his pierced hands and feet, and the cruelty of the soldiers, as when Jesus cried, "I thirst, and they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall."

They remembered, too, their mother's emotion at the sight, and the name of the dear Saviour became forever associated in their minds with all that was tender and touching ; a name, too, in which each of them had a personal interest, for did not Mrs. Murray look at them when she said, "Dear children, Jesus, our Saviour, shed his blood that your sins might be washed away."

After twenty minutes passed in talking to and with the children about the sinner's Friend, they began to repeat any little hymns or texts of Scripture which they had learned during the week, and then she gave them a lesson on the Commandments.

The class repeated in unison the first, second, third, fourth and fifth, and then she taught them the sixth, which was the one in order for the day.

The words "*Thou shalt not kill,*" were repeated over and over so many times that the twin strangers were delighted to be able to say them with the others.

"Did you ever see a dead person?" asked the lady; "one who was lying cold and still, and could not speak nor move?"

Several scholars shook their heads, but one bright-looking colored boy, with a gush of tears, whispered,

"Our baby died, and I saw him in the coffin."

"Yes, Henry; I saw him, too," rejoined the teacher, tenderly. "He was a dear baby, but God wanted him in his beautiful world above, and he called him away. You were very sorry to lose him, I know."

The small woolly head was nodded in a most decided manner.

"But suppose, Henry, that you had been angry with your dear brother, and had struck him till he died, wouldn't you have grieved more after he had gone?"

"I never did strike him, ma'am. He was too little ;" and Henry's black eyes flashed.

"Can any of you tell me what wicked man did strike his brother and kill him ?"

"Cain ! Cain ! he killed good Abel," was the cry from many voices.

"Why did he strike him ?"

"Because he was angry and hated him."

"Yes, he was angry. Have any of you ever been angry with your brother or sister, or with your playmates? Have you ever struck them, or been unkind to them ?"

Beatrice dropped her head, while her face flushed crimson, and several others gazed sorrowfully at their teacher.

"My dear little ones," the lady went on, "Jesus Christ says, 'whoso hateth his brother is a murderer.' You have the feeling in your heart which may lead you to kill him. Remember, then, when you are vexed with your young companions, when you tease them, snatch their playthings, or push them roughly away, remember you are cultivating the spir-

it of a murderer. If you do not conquer your naughty temper, and try to be meek like the Saviour, who when the cruel soldiers struck him and spat upon him, answered not a word ; if you don't try to forgive them when they have really offended you, you may be in heart a murderer if you do not really cause death."

Poor Beatrice pressed her hand into that of her sister, and forgetting where she was, exclaimed in Italian, "I never will strike you again."

The little creature had a passionate temper, but until now she never had been told that she ought to control it.

Madelina was far more mild and yielding. She quickly passed her arm around her sister's neck, though a deeper hue dyed her cheek, when she saw that the attention of the class was attracted toward them.

At this moment, a gentleman brought in some papers to be distributed among the children, and presently they united in a closing hymn.

The little ones flocked eagerly around their teacher, when the school was dismissed, while the twins stood shyly back, holding each other by the hand, presenting to the eye of the kind lady a most lovely picture. Every moment she became more interested in them, and the touching scene of affection during the lesson, by no means diminished this.

Taking them by the hand, she led them out to join Antonio, whom she found engaged in an earnest conversation with the young man who had taught his class. At least she so judged from his sparkling eye, and flushed, interested countenance.

He held in his hand a small book, and as they were about to part, the gentleman said, "If you persevere in studying that little book, you will soon be able to read. Good bye, I shall expect to see you here next Sabbath."

"Oh, yes, indeed! I'll come."

He started and smiled as he saw Mrs. Murray and the little girls standing near, while Madelina began eagerly to tell him in their own language, how happy she had been.

From the Sabbath school they walked to the Common, and there, seated on a bench, with the pleasant sun shining upon them, away from the noise, and confusion, and filth of their own home, he taught them the names of the letters he had learned, making them repeat the sounds over and over, until they could readily distinguish them.

He related, too, the lesson from the Bible, which had been the subject for the day, and which, unused as he was to serious instructions, had made a deep impression on his mind. Nor were they backward in giving an account of what they had seen and heard, and as they skipped along the side-walk, on their way home, concluded that the Sabbath was the very best of all the days in the week.

To Antonio a new life seemed opening; a life so far beyond the scenes of daily and hourly toil, merely for the purpose of getting bread, which had consumed sixteen years of his life, that he knew he should never be contented to go back to it.

Entering the narrow court in which they lived, they heard the noise of rude laughter, in a tenement near their own. The room was full of men and women who had come thither to congratulate a young, very young girl, on her betrothal to one of their number of organ grinders.

Sending the twins to their mother, Antonio entered and joined with the rest in their mirth, but after a while stole away from the untidy apartment, the saw dust which had covered the floor being mixed with filth of all kinds, the walls hung with articles of almost every description, old, soiled clothes and food being brought into disgusting intimacy, and passed on to another house.

Here he found Maurice, Andrea's brother, lying on a wide shelf, at one end of the small apartment, patting a child of three years in order to soothe it to sleep.

He sprang up with an exclamation of impatience, and, addressing Antonio in their native tongue, asked where he had been, that he was so dressed out.

The lad only answered by a bitter smile. This was his best and worst dress, for it was his only one, but it was put on with more care than usual, and his hands and face were as clean as soap and water could make them, while, by the aid of a broken comb, his closely curling locks were arranged off from his forehead.

He was well browned by exposure to the sun, but there was an expression of resolve upon his countenance, a strange light in his eye, which had arrested the attention of his companion.

"Where have you been?" he asked once more.

"To a school, with Madelina and Beatrice, where I'm learning to read."

"Ah! a fine schooling you'll get from Father Rainoni, when he hears of it."

"I shall tell him, myself," said the youth, shrugging his shoulders. "I don't believe he'll forbid it."

"Maybe he won't," responded the other,

with an incredulous laugh, and turned to the child again.

In Andrea's room he found the children talking merrily over their adventures, while Lizette, as she proudly gazed into their animated faces, began once more to form brilliant projects for their future.

Hastily partaking of his portion of the broken food, he called the children into the smaller room, and there, seated on the low pallet, they passed most of the afternoon in perfecting themselves in their first lesson in reading, and in repeating again and again, the instructions of the morning, in connection with their beautiful picture-book.

Andrea and Lizette meanwhile, with Nora and the babies, went out into the court, where most of their neighbors were assembled, talking, laughing, or rehearsing reminiscences of earlier days in their own loved country.

CHAPTER VI.

ANTONIO'S ASPIRATIONS.

DURING the week which followed, Antonio and his young companions were one day walking slowly through Congress street, when they saw a tall, white-haired gentleman, approaching.

He stopped as they met, and patted the twins affectionately on the head, though his face looked sad and rather stern.

Presently, however, a benevolent smile played on his fine features, as Antonio said in Italian,

“ I was coming to see you, Father Rainoni ; I am sick of being an organ grinder, I am sick of living in our dirty, filthy court. I want to be something better and greater than I am. Shall I be obliged to go back to Italy before I can improve my condition ? ”

"No, no, my son," answered the good father, warmly. "I will help you. You shall come to me, and we will talk about it. But now, I want you to tell the mother of these children, I forbid them to go out with the tambourines. I do not like it. They must go to school. They are too young to walk the streets, and their father does not need the money. He has enough. They will grow bold—I forbid them. They must be modest, and they cannot, if they are always in the streets."

"I begged her to let them go with me," said Antonio, hastening to relieve Lizette from the blame she did not deserve. "I thought it would be better for them than to stay where there is so much confusion and filth; and for me it makes the day so much shorter."

"They must go to school," reiterated Father Rainoni; "tell their mother to send them to school."

"I will tell her. I have begun to learn myself."

"That is right, my son."

"I went last Sabbath, to a school where I learned some of my letters."

The good man gazed earnestly into the boy's anxious countenance, looked thoughtful a moment, and then said with a sigh, "Well, my son, come to me and I will talk with you about it. I should be glad to have you learn."

In the course of the week, Andrea went to the priest for directions about placing his children in school, when the good father tried to impress him with the idea that it would be better for him to spend some of his money for the benefit of his family, instead of hoarding it up as he did. He talked with him, also, upon the duty of cleanliness, saying, "It disgusts me to see my country people living in so filthy a manner."

Andrea Ritti was shrewd, and not even to his priest would he confess how much money he had accumulated. The motive he had always used with his wife, having found it the most effective, was the desire to save enough to buy back their pretty cottage in Italy.

This had been accomplished long before now ; but the habit of hoarding had grown strong upon him, and he put off from year to year, what he knew to be the most earnest desire of her heart. To Father Rainoni he urged that he provided a room for his wife and children to live by themselves, while many of his neighbors lived two or three families in one apartment.

The silver-haired man shook his head gravely, as he said, "It is not right, it is not decent to live so, and there is no necessity. You are all able to live better."

Saturday evening Antonio called to see him, but he was away from home. He easily persuaded himself, however, that Father Rainoni had not intended to forbid his going to school, and therefore in company with the little girls, proceeded at an early hour to Charles street.

His teacher was much gratified by the zeal he displayed in acquiring knowledge. He was affected to see with what absorbing interest this untaught youth listened to the teachings of

Scripture, nor did he fail to press upon his new scholar the claims of a crucified Saviour.

Mrs. Murray, too, sympathized with her young friends in their pleasure at being about to attend a day school, and encouraged them to great diligence in their studies.

Another walk to the Common, where each imparted to the others what was remembered of the morning instructions, and then they returned home to find their room filled to overflowing with men, women and children. Some were talking in loud, incoherent tones ; others crying ; others still pressing their advice upon the weeping Lizette, who sat on the side of the bed, trying in vain to hold her little Silvio, who was in a dreadful fit.

Finding Andrea had gone for a physician, Antonio pushed through the crowd and endeavored to relieve the mother by taking the child from her arms.

Maurice and Nora were also on the bed, and were crying in concert ; Madelina and Beatrice joined them, until the physician coming in,

quickly dispersed the crowd, and ordered Andrea to get ready a tub of warm water.

This was soon procured, for most of the families had a stove in their rooms, and water heating on it. The poor little fellow was placed in it, and soon began to exhibit the tranquilizing effect by the relaxing of the stiffened limbs.

The fit, the doctor said, was caused by eating a large quantity of orange peel, which the father confessed he had picked up in the street and given to the child. A feather dipped in oil and run down its throat, soon caused it to throw from its stomach this indigestible matter, when the little one seemed entirely relieved.

The joy of Lizette at the restoration of her babe was as great as her distress had been at its danger. Hugging the child to her heart, with passionate energy, she laughed and cried over it, until Andrea told her she was making a fool of herself.

The next morning the twins, accompanied by their father, went to the public school,



The Sunday School class.—p. 63.



where he placed them in the care of the teacher to whom he had been directed. They began to cry, however, when they found they were to be left alone, and it was with great difficulty they could be persuaded to remain.

Miss Briant, the young lady who had the care of the primary department, was greatly interested in her new charge, and before the close of the first session, had so won upon their affectionate hearts, by her loving smile and pleasant voice, that they were quite reconciled to their new life.

Beatrice was very proud of being able to name some of the letters on the large card the teacher held before her. She was anxious to learn others that she might repeat them to Antonio.

Miss Briant was quite surprised at their rapid progress, having found the Italian children indolent in the acquisition of knowledge. Could she have known with what eagerness every letter and word she taught them was treasured up, for the sake of their companion, she would have ceased to wonder.

The book of first lessons was carefully carried back and forth to and from school, though at the risk of becoming greatly soiled from contact with articles in their untidy apartment, while Antonio's hours for organ grinding, were often curtailed in order that he might take an extra lesson from his dear little instructors.

Though the surroundings were very far from attractive, yet it was a pretty sight to see Antonio seated on the pallet of straw, the twins pressing close to his side, the open book in his hand, and three pairs of sparkling eyes fixed intently on its pages.

To be sure Beatrice, forgetting the lessons of Mrs. Murray, sometimes burst out in a passion, at some trifling difference with her sister, but Antonio soon succeeded in soothing her, and then they went on quietly with the exercise.

In the course of a few weeks they had learned to read and spell in words of one syllable, and now indeed, Lizette began to feel proud of them and their wonderful acquirements.

It was not until the third call upon Father Rainoni that Antonio found him at home. He was shown into a room which had once been covered with an oil cloth carpet, but which was now so thoroughly worn that the entire floor, near the entrance, was bare. A table stood in the middle of the apartment, on which were writing materials and a few books.

The good man presently entered, and by his mild, affectionate manner, won the entire confidence of the boy. Before he was at all conscious of it, he was pouring out into the ear of his silver-haired friend, the hopes and fears which of late had agitated his mind.

He acknowledged that, in comparison with his neighbors, he considered himself as living a quiet and blameless life, but he wanted a higher standard; he longed to break away from all the associations which surrounded him, and have a chance to establish a character for himself. He was disgusted with the manner in which his country people lived, hiving themselves in an unhealthy, stifled court, and eat-

ing the refuse food, thrown to them as beggars. Nowhere else in the whole city had he seen such apparent destitution, and certainly nowhere was there such total disregard to neatness and order.

"I am not willing to live so. I cannot bear the thought that Madelina and Beatrice should grow up in such a place. We have nothing to look forward to, that makes life desirable."

"I am pleased," answered the priest, "that you feel so. I have long been disgusted with the habits of my country people. I wish they would stay at home. I shall go to see our Italian consul and get him to see to it that they do not have so easy passports. I do not wish so many to come here. They are too crowded. But for you, my lad, I feel a great interest. I am glad you are learning to read. You must get on as fast as you can. Andrea tells me your father had a little place of his own, at home, and carried fruit to market."

"Oh, yes, father, I remember it quite well. He owned two donkeys; and when the pan-

niers were not too full, he used to let me ride. Those were happy days for me. Perhaps if I did not remember them I should be more contented."

Antonio sighed deeply.

"Cheer up! cheer up!" said the priest, smiling, as he patted the lad's shoulder; "you are too young to sigh."

"Mother used to sing," the youth went on, "as she helped my father trim the vines, or prepared the fruit for market. Sometimes she used to make pretty bouquets, and allow me to sell them. Then, when he was away, she used to spin."

"And you would like to return to your mother's home?" inquired the kind man, in a more cheerful voice.

"Yes, father; if I could be as happy as they were."

"Do you doubt that, too?" The question was asked with a smile.

"I don't know what to say. Sometimes I think I never can be happy. I don't live as

well as I know how, and yet I am always saying to myself, I am better than any of my neighbors. I am always longing for something to be different, and repining that my life is that of a poor, despised organ grinder."

Father Rainoni gazed thoughtfully upon the floor for so long a time, that Antonio began to think he had forgotten his presence. With a deep sigh, he at last rose to take his leave, just as the good man said with emphasis,

"Andrea must go back, and take you with him. He has money enough to buy a farm, and you can be a market man as your father was."

CHAPTER VII.

THE LEGACY DISCOVERED.

THE next Sabbath was so rainy that Litzette would not allow the twin girls to go out.

Beatrice and even Madelina rebelled stoutly against her authority, the former declaring she would not stay at home.

"I don't like to live in this ugly, dirty place," she screamed, stamping her small foot, with passionate energy. "I want to live in a nice room with a carpet on the floor, and the chairs set up; and the beds made, as the little girls do that go to my school; then I'd be content to stay at home."

"Ellen Lane said, we lived in a nasty hole," faltered Madelina, her lip quivering.

"I say, why can't we have a better house," cried Beatrice, angrily.

“Yes, Lizette,” urged Antonio, his black eye flashing; why do we live so? I have long been ashamed of it.”

“Then it is you, ungrateful boy, who have been making the children discontented and angry with their mother,” exclaimed the woman, turning fiercely upon him. “You are getting proud, and had better take the money Marietta left for you, and leave us. We should be well rid of you.”

“I didn’t know my mother left any money,” faltered Antonio, turning pale, with excess of feeling. “Where is it?”

Lizette in her excitement, had betrayed a secret which had been carefully kept for many years. She knew that Andrea would be in a great rage, and instead of answering the boy, began to cry and sob passionately.

“I’ll find Andrea and ask him,” said the lad, in a more decided tone. “Father Rainoni shall know I have been cheated.”

“Mother, don’t cry,” murmured Beatrice, “I don’t want to go away.”

"Don't be angry with her," whispered Madelina, stealing her hand into that of Antonio, "and don't go without Beatrice and me."

"Yes; it's time for me to go to the school. I must go now; but I'll come back, for I want to see your father." He darted an angry look at Lizette, and went hastily from the room.

"Oh, what have I done?" exclaimed the woman, wringing her hands. "He will meet Andrea and ask him, and then he'll be terribly angry. How could I have become so vexed?"

This reminded her of the wish of the children to live in a better place, and her anger turned against them for saying anything which had led her to betray herself.

Madelina came toward her and put up her hand to wipe away her mother's tears, but Lizette shook her off roughly, saying, "You don't love me; you may go away, and live with Antonio."

"I shall go, too," screamed Beatrice, in a loud, excited tone. "I sha'n't stay here by myself."

At this moment Andrea entered with his pipe in his mouth, inquiring what was the matter with Beatrice.

His wife began eagerly to explain that Antonio had grown proud and discontented, and that even the children were tired of their home.

She said this, hoping to turn the blame from herself.

"Well," he answered, "that comes of hearing you grumble so much, I suppose."

"Has Antonio gone to the school?" he asked, turning to the twins.

"Yes; mother would not let us go."

"Nonsense, Lizette; what harm could it do them?"

She was sulky now, and would not reply; and presently they took their book and sat down in the small room to look at it.

Several times while they were alone, she tried to tell him what she had done, but dared not. Before she was aware that it was time, Antonio had returned.

Walking into the room, he went straight to

Andrea, and asked, "where is the money my mother left in your care?"

The question was so wholly unexpected that the man had no opportunity to hide his confusion. His countenance was intensely flushed as he sprang to his feet, and then as suddenly grew pale.

"It is safe," he answered, in a faltering voice; "who told you about it?"

"No matter who. I wish to know how much there is, and why you have never given it to me. Be careful how you answer, for if I am a poor organ grinder, I am the son of honest parents, who never defrauded an orphan left to their care."

Lizette burst into a loud cry. "He never meant to keep it from you, Antonio. I have heard him say a hundred times that he should buy a pretty cottage when you were married to Madelina or Beatrice, and settle you in it. And all this time it's been kept safe, and not a penny of it taken to find you clothes. Marietta herself could not have been more choice of it."

The youth smiled a hard, bitter smile, as he looked down at his clothes ; perhaps after all they had not intended to cheat him. "They have always been kind to me," he thought. "I will not lay it up against them."

To Andrea's great surprise and delight, therefore, he held out his hand, saying, "I choose to believe it as Lizette has said, that you were only keeping my money for me. To-morrow we will go to Father Rainoni, and have it given into my own care."

"That is right, my boy, that is right." The man, after a glance at his wife, walked straight from the room.

"Oh, Antonio !" she exclaimed, as soon, as they were alone, "how good and kind you were, not to say who told you. That was just like Marietta. You shall have the whole of your fortune, every cent ; and you shall go back with us to dear, happy Italy, and we will all live there, together."

The youth did not answer, but looked thoughtfully upon the floor.

"I am sure," she said, in a tone of entreaty, "ever since your mother died, I have loved you as well as either of my own children. I was vexed when I said I wished to be rid of you. If you're discontented, it's what I was for years, after Maurice, (bad luck to him!) enticed us from our sweet home."

"But there is no need of our living so," urged Antonio earnestly. "I am determined to do so no longer. We might, at least be more cleanly."

He glanced in disgust around the disorderly room, adding, "to think of the children being brought up in such a place as this!"

Noon found him sitting in the room of Maurice Ritti, having passed the time in moody silence. His mind was in a tumult, not merely from the events of the morning, but in consequence of the words of his teacher, "you are a sinner before God, and can never be truly happy until you have embraced Christ as your Saviour and Redeemer."

The poor youth had always prided himself,

as he told his priest, upon being better than his neighbors. He had longed for an Almighty helper, but to be condemned as a sinner, and by one whom he had considered a friend, it was humbling indeed.

Toward night he became so much distressed that he resolved to call upon Mrs. Murray.

To his great delight, he found her in the kitchen, reading the Bible to the cook and chamber girl.

She came into the narrow passage-way, and took his hand, as she inquired whether he were ill.

"I am unhappy," he said, placing his hand on his heart, while he tried to choke back his tears.

"Come in," said she, warmly. "Come and listen to the reading, and then I will talk with you."

She read the account of the prodigal son, repeating the words slowly, and sometimes commenting upon them, while the poor youth sat, the tears rolling unconsciously down his bronzed cheeks.

"And now," said she, when, after an hour, she had summoned him to a small room back of the parlors, "tell me just how you feel, and I will try to advise you."

He shook his head sadly. "I don't know how to express it," he said, in his broken English. "I thought myself very good. I never steal, nor swear, nor tell lies. I said often to myself, whoever goes to heaven, I am sure of being there. My people often get angry, but I keep good-natured, until to-day, I find myself very cross, very hard here," putting his hand on his breast. "Since you read, I think I not good. I very like the poor man going away from his home. I eat bad food, too."

His face flushed crimson, and expressed the most intense disgust.

"My poor boy," responded the lady, "you have indeed cause to be grateful to God for preserving you from the crimes you have mentioned. It is He who has kept you from these outward forms of sin. The trouble and distress you feel, is because you are trying to save

yourself and win heaven, by your own goodness. This you can never do. No one, not even the most perfect man on earth, can do it. We are all sinners in his sight. Our conduct may look fair and upright in the eyes of man, but God looks into the heart. He understands all our motives. He has been looking into your heart, Antonio ; what has he seen there ? ”

He hung his head to conceal his confusion.

“ Perhaps he has seen that you were honest and truthful, that you kept your temper, and abstained from improper language, in order to appear well in the sight of your companions, and not from the desire to honor him who made you. He may have seen there a desire to gain happiness and heaven, by your own righteousness, and an unwillingness to accept the righteousness of Christ.

“ The Bible tells us that God so loved us that he gave his only begotten Son to die for us. This he certainly would not have done if we could have been saved without his death.

No, my dear boy ; there is no other way but through Christ. He took our sins that we might be pardoned, and yet God be just. Do you understand this ? ”

The youth sighed heavily, as he shook his head.

“ I will try to explain more simply, then.”

“ Suppose Mr. Ritti had forbidden his little girls to go out of the house while he was away with his organ, and told them if they disobeyed him he would punish them. The day seemed long to them, and after a while they stole out of the door through the court, and into the street. When he came home, he found out that they had done so, and procured a whip to chastise them. Poor girls, they began to cry and beg him to forgive them ; but he says, ‘ No. I cannot, because I have promised that if you disobeyed you must be punished.’ They throw themselves on their knees before him and wring their hands, until you can endure it no longer, and you say to him, ‘ I will bear the punishment. They have done wrong, and it is

right you should keep your word, but I will endure it in their stead. I love them so dearly I cannot bear to see them whipped.' "

Antonio gasped for breath, and clasped his hands suddenly to his heart.

With a silent prayer that she might be able to impress the truth upon his tender mind, the lady went on. "Just so God says to us, 'if you sin you must lose the delights of heaven, and dwell in that dreadful world where hope never comes.' Every one of us has sinned. We have had hard thoughts of God ; we have been discontented and repining, in the condition he has placed us. We were hastening to our own punishment.

"Then Christ, the beloved Son of God comes forward and says, 'They have disobeyed and deserve punishment, but I will endure it for them. I will die on the cross, that they may live in heaven.' "

The lad caught a small book from his pocket, which contained a picture of Christ on the cross, and pressed his lips reverently upon it,

while great drops fell thick and fast upon it.
“Hail, blessed Saviour!” he cried. “Hail thou that didst hang on the cross for me!”

He wept until he lost all self-control, and, after a time, rising abruptly, he faltered out, “Thank you, lady. Thank you,” and hurried into the street.

CHAPTER VIII.

ANTONIO'S FIRST PRAYER.

THE rain was still falling, though not so heavily as in the morning; but he wandered up and down the street, scarcely conscious what he was doing. His heart was full. He pressed the picture of the Saviour again and again to his lips. Heretofore it had only been to him a beautiful print, cherished for the sake of the love he bore his dying mother, who with her latest breath had given it into his hands. Now it became precious as a remembrancer of the sufferings of his crucified Lord.

It was so late when he returned to the court that he did not as usual ascend to Andrea's, but threw himself without undressing, upon a pile of straw, which had served him for a bed, since the marriage of Maurice to a young widow.

His companions, of whom there were seven, were all asleep, but he lay for a long time thinking of his mother, and wondering whether she had accepted Jesus as her Saviour. He pressed the picture once more to his lips, in the darkness, as he said to himself, "Whenever I grow proud, and think I can win heaven by my own goodness, I will look at this and recollect that Jesus thought it necessary to hang on the accursed tree for me."

Then thrusting the soiled and worn book in which it was contained, into his bosom, his senses were soon locked in slumber.

I have already said that Andrea owned several organs, one of which he let by the day, to Antonio. Heretofore it had been the habit of the boy to place all his earnings in the hand of his friend, relying upon him for the trifling expenses incurred for his rent and clothes.

The income of an organ grinder is a very precarious one; sometimes Antonio collected barely enough to pay for the use of the instrument, and then again, some lady or gentleman

would take compassion on his apparently destitute condition, and give him a couple of dimes.

The morning following the events related in the last chapter, Antonio awoke early, and began to form some hasty plans for the future. He was by no means an adept at figures; and yet he knew enough to calculate that his average earnings were somewhere from thirty to fifty cents a day. He resolved to lay this sum by, until he had sufficient to purchase a suit of clothes.

"I am young and strong," he said to himself, "and ought to be able to earn my own support."

His cheek crimsoned, as it often did, at the thought of eating broken bits, such as many a beggar would scorn. "I will not do it much longer," said he, earnestly; "that I am determined on."

Then he turned his eyes around the confined apartment where he lay. Most of his companions had arisen, and gone out in search of food. But there was the filthy straw, with perhaps a

bundle of old rags rolled together for a pillow. Then his eyes rested on the dusty ceiling, and on the dirt-stained windows, and he actually loathed himself that he lived in the midst of such uncleanness. He rose at length, and went mechanically about his daily toil. Having procured a better supply of food than usual, he carried it to Andrea's room, but was surprised to find the five children seated on the bed, while Lizette, with an old cloth fastened to a stick, was vigorously scrubbing the floor.

She smiled when she saw him, and pointing to the confusion in the room, for the chairs were piled on the table, she said, good-naturedly, "I'm giving it a good scouring for once." Madelina and Beatrice called loudly for him to come and join them on the bed.

"No, no," said he with a laugh, "the bed is full already."

He retained pieces of bread and meat sufficient for his own breakfast, and passing the rest to Lizette, she threw them on the bed to the children, who began to clamor loudly for their breakfast.

“ You will see how nice it will be when you come home,” she cried, as he turned to go down the stairs.

Placing the strap of his organ round his neck, he passed out of the narrow court. On reaching North street, he stood a moment considering which route to take, when a rude lad, who had often annoyed him by harsh words and low tricks, came up suddenly from behind, and struck him a violent blow on the head.

Without a moment’s thought, Antonio set his organ against the side of a building, and flew at his adversary with so much force that he knocked him down.

The screaming of the bystanders, “ a fight ! a fight ! ” speedily brought a police officer to the spot ; but not before the rough boy, enraged at being overthrown, had sprung at the organ, giving it a violent kick with his foot.

“ Come with me,” said the officer, sternly, catching him by the arm. “ You’re rather too ready to get into a row.” He then turned to Antonio and bade him follow to the station-

house. The boy eagerly told his story, that he had been going through the street peaceably, when the other assaulted him. This statement being confirmed by a man who had seen the whole proceeding from his shop window, the lad was released with a caution to let fighting dogs alone in future.

With a heavy heart he took up his organ, but found he could not use it until it was repaired. Returning, therefore, to the court, he hurried into the room where he slept, and which was by this time quite empty, and placing the broken instrument on the floor, threw himself upon the bed, and covered his face with his hands.

"There is an end of my trying to be good," was his silent ejaculation, when, after a passionate flood of tears, he became at length more composed; "or of my trying to better myself in any way. That hateful creature must come and throw me down. I hope he'll be severely punished by the court."

He stopped short, frightened at the violence

of his own resentment. One sentence in the last Sabbath's lesson recurred distinctly to his mind. "Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not."

He thrust his hand into his bosom, but took it sorrowfully out again, saying, in a more subdued tone, "No; I am not worthy—I am afraid I shall never be able to forgive as he did."

Antonio had never been taught to go to God with all his sorrows. He did not know the comfort of pouring out before him his griefs, and asking help and strength to perform his duty through the trials and vicissitudes of life.

To be sure, after listening to the prayers of the superintendent at the Mission School, he did try, in his feeble way, to ask the blessing of God. But he received no answer, for he expected none. Heaven and the mercy-seat seemed exalted too far above him for his voice to reach them.

Now as he lay crouched down on that pallet

of straw, shocked at the state of his own heart, and beginning to be penitent at the anger and revenge which had embittered him, not only toward his rude companion, but toward all mankind, he longed earnestly to be able to pray ; to go to God as a child would go to a father, confess his guilt, and cry for pardon.

“ Oh, if I only knew how to pray ! ” he began, when suddenly, with a feeling of awe, he recalled the words of the poor prodigal, “ Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son ; make me as one of thy hired servants.”

At this moment, sounds of voices on the stairs, arrested his attention.

“ He wasn’t hurt much, for I saw him coming back with his organ.”

“ I’m not so sure of that,” replied Andrea’s voice, speaking in a loud, excited tone.

“ I don’t know what we should do if anything happened to the lad,” said Lizette, half crying.

"Oh, Antonio! you're hurt; you need not deny it. I know you are," she cried, bending over him. "And to think I was making the room look so nice, to please you."

"Don't talk about that, now," exclaimed Andrea, impatiently. "Where are you hurt poor boy?"

"I am not hurt at all; that is, not much," he added, putting his hand to his head, as a giddy feeling warned him that he still felt the effects of the blow; but the organ is broken."

The man went to the instrument, and after a moment's examination said, "Benoni can mend it in an hour."

"Get up, if you can, and come to my room," said Lizette, eagerly.

Madelina and Beatrice welcomed him with joy, pointing out to his notice, "the improvement their mother had made in the room.

Indeed, the apartment looked a third larger, since the litter of half-worn shoes, dresses and coats, with various culinary utensils, usually lying about, were thrust out of sight, under the bed.

The floor was cleaner than he ever remembered to have seen it ; and the clothes were spread smoothly over the bed. Even the twin cradles were piled up, with sundry other articles, in the smaller room, while Lizette and the children, with a look of triumph, were standing in the middle of the floor.

"It won't be half as handy," suggested the woman, pointing to the miscellaneous heap protruding from beneath the old quilt, "but I'm glad to do it, if you like it."

Antonio smiled, but there was no heartiness in it. Indeed, he could hardly suppress a sigh as he witnessed this miserable attempt at order. The vision of a neat kitchen, with every article needed for cooking, arranged on shelves, by themselves, flashed across his mind, but no such plan seemed feasible in these crowded apartments.

"Don't it look nice ?" shouted Madelina, dancing up and down before him.

"Yes, a great deal better ; but I'm afraid you won't like to keep it so, Lizette."

Suddenly he started up impelled by a happy thought.

“Where’s Andrea?” he asked.

“He took the organ to be mended.”

“Come in, here,” said the boy, eagerly advancing to the bed-room, and taking a rapid survey of its capabilities.

“All this side of the room might have shelves to keep your dishes, the spider and other things on, and this side, nails for hanging clothes.”

“But where would the children’s bed go, then?”

“If anything must go under the large bed, put this there, and pull it out at night. When all those old baskets and other things hanging on the nails, are taken down, it would look a great deal better. I know you never had such things hanging round in your nice cottage, at home, Lizette.”

“No, indeed; but that was so very long ago.”

“Oh, well! we shall live there again, some time.”

Andrea soon coming in, the plans were proposed to him, and though he considered them entirely unnecessary, the improvements Antonio had suggested, were made, and were found to add much to the comfort of all the parties.

CHAPTER IX.

CONFERENCE MEETING.

ANTONIO wandered up and down the square. He had no object in view. He cared for nothing except to rid himself of the anxious thoughts, which, since his last conversation with his good friend, Mrs. Murray, continually intruded themselves into his mind.

His guilt as a sinner before God, the danger of living on from day to day, careless and thoughtless of the salvation of his soul, his ignorance of the way to come to Christ, rushed with terrible power through his mind, until he was well nigh distracted.

Unconsciously he had approached the Bethel chapel, from which, at this moment issued the sound of many voices, uniting in a hymn

of praise to God. He stood under the open window and listened —

“ There is a beautiful world,
Where saints and angels sing,
A world where peace and pleasure reign
And heavenly praises ring.
We'll be there;
Palms of vict'ry,
Crowns of glory we shall wear,
In that beautiful world on high.”

Oh ! with what a thrill of pain he said to himself, as the chorus of many fervent, earnest voices died away, “ I know nothing of that beautiful world ; I shall not be there.”

Then there came an irresistible longing to join that company of worshippers. He walked slowly down the narrow alley to the vestry door ; but then, trembling with excitement, and the fear that he should be considered an intruder, he hesitated for several minutes before he dared enter.

Once within the room, a man near the door beckoned him to a seat. A gentleman in the desk was at this moment giving an account of a remarkable appearance of the Aurora Borealis, which he had witnessed in early life.

"I was but a boy, then," he went on, "and my father called me to witness the wonderful scene. Hundreds of people were standing in groups on the snow, which was crimson from the reflection of the fiery red glow of the sky. The whole heavens seemed in a blaze ; indeed, we could almost imagine we heard the hissing and crackling of the flames, as the fiery forks shot upward, while ever and anon the stars appeared to drop from their places in the firmament.

"A terrible awe fell upon the wondering group. At last I remember that one man, in a subdued voice, said, 'I suppose the day of judgment will resemble this.'

"The solemn words, '*day of judgment*,' passed from one group to another, until, with one accord, the assembled multitude fell down on their knees before God, while from many a poor creature, one hour before careless and thoughtless of his Maker, came the heart-rending cry, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'

"In one part of the common a poor widow

knelt, her hands and eyes upraised, while from her quivering lips an earnest, oh how earnest, prayer was heard, ‘God have mercy on my son.’ ”

Antonio, who had been leaning forward with strained eyes and clenched hands, listening to every word of the speaker, sank back pale and breathless with terror. For a few moments his heart beat so fiercely that he could not fix his mind upon the exhortation to immediate repentance, which followed.

He covered his face with his hands, and wept aloud.

Presently his attention was arrested by a voice saying in a loud, earnest tone, “Mean, cowardly, skulking ! No wonder the snow blushed crimson.”

He looked up to the desk, and instantly recognized that friend and father to the sailor, known in every part of the world, as Father Taylor.

At this moment his features were stamped with contempt and utter loathing.

“Yes,” he repeated, “*how* mean, *how* cowardly, for men, who all their lives had despised God, who had scorned his offers of mercy, who had laughed, perhaps, at the suffering of his Son, now, in the first moment of danger, to fall upon their knees and cry to him to save them.

“No, young man,” pointing in the direction where Antonio sat crouching behind a pillar, to escape observation ; “no, aged sinner, when the heavens are on fire, and the earth is being rolled together as a great scroll, it will then be too late to call upon God. It will be too late for you, mothers, to cry to him to save your sons. He will have something else to attend to in that terrible day. If, before that awful hour, you have not made your peace with him ; if you have not repented of your sins, if you have not ceased to do evil, and learned to do well, if you have not chosen Christ as your Saviour, another cry will be heard from your lips.

“Yes,” he added, in an impassioned tone “you will call upon the rocks to fall upon you and hide you from the face of Him who sitteth

on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.

"Come, then, you that have one particle of manhood. Come *now*, while the sky is serene, while God is waiting to be gracious, stand up like men," drawing up his form and folding his arms across his breast, "and call upon his name, confess your sins, and supplicate his mercy. Come *now*, while you have it in your power to show Him that you are grateful for His love; devote the life that he has given, and a hundred times preserved from a watery grave, to Him and His service forever."

"I do! I will!" cried the poor boy, starting unconsciously to his feet.

"Let us pray," said Father Taylor, falling on his knees.

And most earnestly was the youth before him, and all others who were "feeling after God, if haply they might find him," commanded to divine mercy.

Antonio's heart echoed every word. A new life seemed begun in his soul. He did not un-

derstand himself. He wondered where was the dreadful load he had been carrying so long. He kept repeating the petitions, and saying, “I will seek him, I do seek him now! O, God, have mercy on me, and save me!”

When he sat down, after the prayer, he saw that many around him were weeping, but he no longer wept. His soul was exultant: he longed to sing, to shout, and presently, in a voice broken by emotion, joined in a hymn which echoed the sentiments of his heart. The closing lines were these —

“ Love I much, I’m much forgiven,
I’m a miracle of grace.”

When the hymn was ended, a young man arose, and in a low, almost inarticulate tone began, “ Father Taylor, I’ve come home, and I’ve fallen again; I was tempted, and I could not resist. I see now that I have been depending too much on my own strength. I thought I was strong, and so I went down worse than ever before, Oh, I’m afraid I’ve been dis-

honoring God and dishonoring religion. I'm afraid I've ruined my soul."

"My son," responded the good man, tenderly, as the youth sank weeping into his seat, "God can't be played with in this manner. Once, twice, thrice, and now for the fourth time, you have fallen in drunkenness, after having hoped that your sins were pardoned. You are weak, you cannot endure temptation, and you must flee from it as you would from the plague. You must distrust yourself and rest wholly on God; but remember, he wont aid you, while you throw yourself in the company of drunkards."

A low groan from the back part of the house arrested the attention of the speaker, and he quickly made his way to the spot.

Many present arose in their seats, while Father Taylor directed one of the sailors to support his fainting and apparently dying companion. Nothing could now be heard but low sobs of suppressed feeling.

After a few moments the man revived from

his swoon, but thought himself dying. He whispered a wish to lay his head on the breast of the kind father who had so many times spoken words of comfort to his aching heart.

"So you shall, my son," was the tender reply; "but you will soon be where you can lean your head on the bosom of your Saviour."

The poor man burst into a loud cry; "Oh, God, help me! Oh, God, save my soul! Oh, do pray for me!"

The audience were becoming terribly excited, and Antonio with his hands clasped upon his heart, looked as if he were about to faint.

"I hope you will all keep quiet," said Father Taylor, in a voice which trembled in spite of himself. "He is a poor fellow from the hospital; but he will soon be at rest. Let us pray for him."

He kneeled in the aisle, retaining the hand of the poor sufferer, whose groans and cries for help and peace, mingled painfully with the supplications of the good man in his behalf. At length he became more composed, his sobs

ceased, and two men assisted in removing him to the hospital. A few solemn words of entreaty from the pastor were uttered to all present to prepare for death while in health, stating that he had reason to hope that their suffering friend was thus prepared; and then an elderly man arose, and in a touching tone of humility said, "I hope God has pardoned me; I have been a dreadful sinner, and it seemed too much to expect him to do it; but I do think he has forgiven me for Christ's sake."

"Just like him," said Father Taylor, his furrowed countenance shining with holy joy.

"And now," continued the man, "I have such a peace here," putting his hard, bronzed hand to his breast; "my heart is swelled nigh to bursting with love to him. Oh, comrades, try him; take him at his word; see if one minute with his love isn't worth a whole life without it!"

He sat down, quite overcome, while a low response came from the desk, "That's a true copy! Oh, how precious those words are!"

It was now a late hour, and the meeting was about to be closed, when a low voice was heard from the back seat, and a man weeping, as he confessed that during his last voyage, he had gone back into sin, and backslidden from God. Now he expected God would say, "cut him down, why cumbereth he the ground?"

"I want to tell a little story," exclaimed a man springing up from his seat. "I live a great vay off from here. I am a Swede. Once I had a grape wine. It grew great—high, but I had no grapes. Then I not vater my wine, I say let it die. One day I go out, and it look like a great stick, all dead; I take out my knife; I begin to cut it down.

"But I stop, I look down, and there leetle grape wines just peeping up, oh, leetle mite grape wines! I laugh, I say, 'I not cut you down, I take care of you; I dig round it, I vater it, I vatch it vell.'

"By and by my wines grow tall and big; had tree bushel grapes from tem last year.

"Now, my brother, take care the wine God

give you: don't you be discouraged; dig round your withered heart; water it well; prune it; then you have tree bushel fruit some time."

He had scarcely resumed his seat when after an earnest, whispered conference with his companion, a young man, apparently about twenty-five, arose and said, "My friends, a son of Christian parents, belonging to another church in this city, wants your prayers. My agony is very great; my system is shattered; my nerves are unstrung by an attack of delirium tremens, from which I am only partially recovered. I have walked my room hours to-day, praying for strength to overcome this terrible hankering for strong drink. I was told that if I came here, I would not be scolded but prayed for. Oh, if you will aid me and strengthen me! if I can feel that Christians are pleading with God for me, I may hope to prevail with him. Oh, if you can help me to reform, how my mother will bless you!"

A burst of tears interrupted him, when the

weeping pastor bowed the knee to lay his case before God. Fervently he besieged the mercy seat for his weak, erring, but penitent son.

We know that such prayers do and will prevail.

CHAPTER X.

D E A T H O F A N D R E A .

ANTONIO awoke the next morning with a prayer on his lip. Even in his dreams, he had lived over again the scenes of the last night, and had prayed for strength to keep the new resolutions he then formed.

Half rising from the straw, he caught a glimpse of his companions, in the dim light of the early dawn, and earnestly wished they could be brought to know Christ, and be as happy as he was.

Stepping carefully over the prostrate forms of his companions, he went out into the court, and gave himself a thorough washing at the pump, then finding that no one else was stirring, he sat down on the steps to the door, and taking his small primer from his pocket, proceeded to spell out some simple words.

But his heart was too full of joy even for this his favorite exercise. He began to sing softly, one of the hymns he had heard the preceding evening.

" Palms of victory,
Crowns of glory
We shall wear,
In that beautiful world on high."

For a few moments, earth with all its busy scenes faded from his mind, and he fancied himself already an inhabitant of that beautiful world, a crown on his head, palms in his hands, entering the pearly gates, walking the golden streets, sitting on the banks of the pure river, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

There, there was no more night, nor death, nor sorrow, nor crying, neither any more pain, for the former things were passed away.

This representation of the joys of heaven had been used and explained in the Mission School, a few weeks previous to this time. Oh, with what rapture his soul now dwelt

upon them ! What fervor of joy he experienced in the hope that he should be there !

A window thrown up above him, warned the youth to leave his place, and commence the duties of the day. He placed the primer in his breast pocket, with a determination to seek Father Rainoni as soon as possible, and communicate to him the happiness with which his soul was filled.

After half an hour, he returned from his usual morning round, and carried a basket of food to Andrea's room, wondering he had not met him as usual.

He found Lizette up, but her husband still in bed, having been unable to sleep through the night.

Antonio approached the bed where Maurice and Silvio were clambering roughly over their father, and coaxed them into the smaller room, where Madelina promised to amuse them.

Andrea's face was flushed with fever, and he complained of a tearing headache, so that he could scarcely collect his thoughts.

"I shall die," he screamed, "if I can't be quiet," as a perfect roar of laughter resounded through the narrow hall.

The lad went quickly to the door, to prevail upon the neighbors to make less noise, and then returned to say that he was going to call the doctor.

"No, no!" exclaimed the sick man, holding both his hands to his head, "I wont see him. If I could only be still, I should be well soon."

It was speedily known to the whole community of organ grinders, that Andrea Ritti was ill in bed. With mistaken kindness the women flocked to his apartment, many of them bringing their babes, who were too young to be left, to offer their sympathy and assistance to poor frightened Lizette.

Almost wholly unused to sickness, the trembling wife knew not what to do in this emergency ; but as Andrea, in answer to all they could say, only reiterated his wish to be quiet and get some sleep, at last Terese, the wife of Maurice Ritti, took the younger children home

with her, Madelina and Beatrice went to school, when he fell into a doze.

When Antonio returned at noon, for he had promised Lizette to do so, he found her weeping bitterly, at the side of the bed where her husband was talking and laughing in an incoherent manner.

"I shall wait no longer," said he, in a whisper; "I shall go for the doctor."

Wringing her hands, she burst into a loud cry. "He'll die; I know he'll die. Oh, what will become of me?"

"Hush, hush! Don't let him hear you talk so," cried Antonio, in a subdued voice. "You'll be sure to make him worse."

Fortunately he met the physician of whom he was in search, near the steps of his own dwelling, and speedily returned with him to the side of the sick man.

"He must be moved to the hospital," was the doctor's first exclamation, as he caught a glimpse of the flushed, swollen face. "He has a dangerous fever."

He then proceeded to examine the pulse and tongue of the sufferer, and shook his head as he found all help would probably be unavailing.

In the meantime, Antonio was holding Lizette by main force, to keep her from throwing herself on the bed by her husband, while she shrieked and screamed like a person suddenly bereft of her reason.

"Stop, woman," cried the doctor, in an authoritative tone. "Do you want to kill him and yourself, too? Stop that noise, I say, and hear what I have to tell you."

Lizette, pale and trembling, staggered against the side of the wall for support.

"You must try to be calm," he continued, in a more gentle tone. "He is very ill, but I shall do all I can to save his life. A great deal depends on you."

He stopped, as with a burst of tears she shook her head, while Antonio rapidly repeated the doctor's words in Italian.

"I want a tumbler of water to give him

some medicine at once," exclaimed the doctor, shuddering, as a loud, unmeaning laugh came from the bed.

Antonio rinsed out a dirty cup, and, filling it, passed it to him.

"Now I want some ice to apply to his head. I am really afraid he is too ill to be removed," he murmured to himself, as Antonio darted quickly from the room.

He told Lizette that he needed large cloths, when she pulled a torn sheet from a bundle under the bed, and placed it in his hands.

The application of the ice produced so favorable an effect, that the physician who had gone out, but returned in an hour, began to entertain a slight hope that he might recover. Andrea now lay more quiet, though he recognized no one.

The night which followed, was a terrible one to Lizette, Maurice and Antonio, who were watching the poor sufferer. About midnight all the worst symptoms returned, so that it required the united strength of the two men to keep him on the bed.

Lizette ran shrieking for a neighbor to summon the doctor as quickly as possible, and then rushed back, wringing her hands, and throwing herself wildly upon the floor.

Toward morning, Father Rainoni entered, his usually calm, pleasant countenance disturbed by anxious forebodings. He stood for some time at the bedside, watching the heaving chest and the closed, quivering eyelids of the dying man. Then saying, "it is too late, I can do nothing for him, now, except to use the preparations for death, and to commit his soul to God," walked slowly from the room.

The poor wife's grief had exhausted itself by its violence. She sat now with her face resting on her palms, which were folded on the table. Occasionally a long-drawn sob disturbed the stillness which reigned in the room where death stood calmly awaiting his victim.

The breathing of the dying man grows fainter and fainter, his eyes have long been fixed and glassy. All unconscious of the fearful plunge before him, he is every moment draw-

ing nearer to the confines which divide time from eternity.

A feeble groan rouses Lizette, just as Antonio, whose eyes have been rivetted on the ghastly face before him, with a shriek, announces "he is dead."

One moment all stand mute with terror, in the presence of this last great enemy, and then the sound of wailing and sobbing fill the room. The sad news flies from one story of the crowded tenement to another, and husbands, wives and children rush in for a last look at the neighbor, who so lately walked among them in his full vigor and strength.

Antonio, wearied with watching, his heart heaving with sorrow, sought the vacated room where he usually lodged, and falling on his knees, wept and prayed for himself and those who were so dear to him.

It was nearly noon when he returned to the chamber of death, for his exhaustion had found relief in sleep, and then it was quite deserted, Lizette and the children having sought refuge in another apartment.

Awe-struck, he cautiously approached the bed which was pulled into the centre of the room, and turning down the sheet which covered the lifeless form, gazed upon that well-known face, calm and immovable in its last, long sleep.

Tears gushed to his eyes, as he asked himself, "Is Andrea happy now? is his soul in the presence and enjoyment of God?"

He tried to recall every event in the life of the departed which seemed like a recognition of his Maker and the duties he owed him. Alas! alas! These were few indeed. He had in the main been a kind husband and father, and in his way, a friend to the desolate orphan, "but oh!" cried the weeping youth, "had he accepted Jesus as his Saviour!"

He turned away, his soul bowed down with grief, seeking, yet dreading to meet his bereaved friends.

"Where is Lizette?" he asked of a woman coming up the stairs.

"Terese has just taken them all to her room," was the answer in a subdued voice.

As soon as he opened the door, Beatrice ran weeping to his arms, and presently Madelina approached and laid her head on his shoulder.

"Have you seen father?" she asked softly.

"Yes; I have just come from his room."

"And is it true that he will never get up any more?"

He shook his head, weeping bitterly.

"I wont have it so," screamed Beatrice, passionately, starting from him, and shaking back her uncombed tresses. "Nobody has any right to take away my father from me, and shut him up in the ground. I'll dig it open and let him out, and have him for my father again. I will do it!"

She planted her foot firmly on the ground, and with her swollen eyes, glanced around to see who would dare dispute her right.

For a moment no one answered, though Lizzette, who was holding both the twin boys, burst into a louder cry.

"Come here, poor child," said Antonio, softly, opening his arms to receive her. "Do you know who has taken your father away?"

"Yes, it was God ; but he isn't good to do it." Her voice was still angry, while on the other side the tears were dropping softly down Madelina's cheeks.

Great sobs came up in the boy's throat, and almost choked him, but presently he said,

"God gave him to you, Beatrice, and he had a right to take him away."

She began to tremble now, as she burst out in a more subdued voice, "but I want a father as well as any little girl."

"I want my father, too," sobbed Leonora, who, in her uncle's arms, had heard all that passed.

"Oh, how I wish I could teach them to feel right," was Antonio's silent ejaculation. "Oh, how dreadful this is!" He felt that he must say something, and after a moment's hesitation began,

"God is good, Beatrice. We know he is, though it seems strange to us that he should have let your father die. He has taken care of you, all your life, and you remember the

verse you learned in the Sabbath school, "God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"Yes; you know our picture of him on the cross; Mrs. Murray told us that was the Son of God," said Madelina, softly.

"So we must believe that he had some good reason for taking him away, though it seems so dreadful to us to part with him."

Lizette strained her babes to her breast as if she feared they would be taken, too, and rocked herself back and forth in the violence of her grief.

CHAPTER XI.

FRESH TRIALS.

IT was some weeks after Andrea's death before Lizette recovered from the shock. Antonio, assisted by Maurice and Terese, tried to rouse her, by representing that the children were now dependent wholly upon her. Holding one of the twin boys in her arms, and the other sitting on the floor at her feet, or dabbling in any dirty water he could find, she would sit for hours, rocking herself back and forth, pondering in an absent way upon the past.

Occasionally a quick step toward her door, or a sudden entrance from the passage-way, into her apartment, would cause her to spring forward with a scream, expecting to see her husband. Then the remembrance that he was lying pale and motionless in the grave, that



never more would she see his face or hear his eager, "Well, Lizette, how now?" would come rushing over her, and her cries would resound through the house.

The little girls, with the buoyancy of childhood, soon recovered their spirits. Madelina and Beatrice entered with much zeal into their studies, and continued to find in Antonio a willing recipient of all that they learned at school. Neither he nor they were, at the time aware how much more rapidly they advanced, in consequence of this constant repetition of their lessons.

They could now read quite intelligibly, and the first time that their mother really seemed to be roused from her indifference to what was passing around her, was on hearing them read aloud, a book of simple, moral lessons which they had brought from the Mission School.

The three were seated as usual on the low bed, Antonio between the twins, each reading a paragraph in turn, after the manner of proceeding in the class.

The first evidence she gave of any attention to them, was her effort to keep Nora and the younger ones quiet. As the story proceeded, and the little heroine was called to lay down her young life, the color fled from her cheek, while her sighs were deep and profound. During the week, this story was often repeated, and never without a similar effect.

One consequence of Andrea's death, Antonio deeply lamented. The interest which Lizette had manifested in tidying her apartment, had never returned. Indeed, the poor youth was quite discouraged as he returned from his daily round with his organ, to find everything at sixes and sevens, and the housewife sitting idly in the midst of the confusion and dirt.

Once or twice when he gently remonstrated, she charged him with being unkind and cruel, to expect she could give her mind to such trifles, when she had met with so great a loss ; so with the help of his young friends, it became his custom to put away some of the numerous articles about the floor, and endeavor to give a

little air of comfort to their home before he sat down to read.

I have already mentioned that Andrea Ritti was the owner of several organs. Indeed, of late, he had found the letting of them so profitable, that sometimes for a week together he did not go out himself, but let his organ to earn money in his place.

The avails of these was paid weekly to Antonio, to whom, by the advice of Father Rainoni, Lizette had committed her pecuniary affairs. Beside this, there was quite a sum of money on interest in one of the city banks, which they still retained as a future fund to purchase their cottage in Italy.

The young organ grinder sometimes wondered that the widow did not express a desire to return at once to her native land. He felt a great burden resting upon him, and many hours when he ought to have been sleeping, he was pondering with reference to his charge.

The poor boy had many secret causes of uneasiness, aside from the care of Andrea's fami-

ly. He had begun to walk in a new path, and he found it lined with difficulties and dangers. Every day he became more intimately acquainted with the strength of sin in his own heart, and more discouraged at the thought of living the life of a Christian.

One morning he was unsuccessful in obtaining a supply of food sufficient for the day, and was obliged to buy a loaf of bread to make up the deficiency. Lizette began to cry and complain that he did not make the efforts he might. "I always had enough," she said impatiently, "while poor Andrea lived."

"There were two of us to get it then," replied Antonio, mildly.

"And two to eat it," she retorted, in a bitter tone. "I suppose you want me to send Madelina and Beatrice out to beg for themselves. I have no doubt you pick out the best of what you find and eat it yourself."

"Take care, Lizette," he cried, his face crimson with anger. He tried for a moment to reason with himself that she didn't mean

what she said, but the charge was so unreasonable and unjust, that it irritated him beyond his control.

“I don’t know why I trouble myself with your affairs at all,” he exclaimed angrily, throwing upon the table the piece of meat he was putting into his mouth.

He had left before she could recover herself to reply, but Madelina slipped unnoticed from the room and followed him. She stood silent — while he dashed away some bitter tears, and not until he was leaving the house ventured to speak.

“You’re not angry with me, Antonio,” she said softly. “I know you’re not angry with me,” and she laid her head caressingly on his arm.

“No,” he answered “I am not,” but he did not smile or pat her head or kiss her as usual. Taking his organ he passed quickly out of the court. If he had only looked behind him, he would have seen that childish head bowed on her lap, in the abandonment of grief.

In truth the young man was very angry, and went through the streets with a haughty determination to punish Lizette by leaving her in future to look out for herself.

"She has no claim upon me," he repeated again and again, "I could do a great deal better by myself; and she's so ungrateful."

He stopped as usual to grind his organ; but his manner was sullen, so that a little girl who often brought him a few pennies to the door ran away afraid he was not the right man. Nor did he wonder, for the music instead of sounding inspiring and pleasant—grated harshly upon his ear.

His mind was so absorbed, that though he went mechanically on from one house to another, and held out his hand for the tiny bit of silver when he was through, yet in his carelessness he nearly ran over a little boy who was walking by the side of his mother.

This somewhat aroused him, and hearing the child cry he stopped to say, I'm very sorry, ma'am, that I knocked him down; I'll give him a tune if he'll wait to hear it."

After this he walked on, his feelings becoming more subdued. "I'm sorry I didn't bid Madelina good bye," was his first regret, "but how could Lizette treat me so, when she knows that for years, I always save anything nice to share with the children; sometimes when I'm very hungry, too. She'd find something to do herself if I left her, and I mean to; I won't bear her scolding any longer."

A pang shot through his heart as he realized that it would be hard to be separated from his young friends. "They seem to belong to me," said he to himself, "I always supposed I should marry one of the little girls when I become old enough. I should be very lonely without them. I dare say Lizette was ill-natured this morning and said that just to vex me."

This seemed to Antonio the longest and most wearisome day he had ever passed.

"I never can be good," he said to himself many times. "I may as well give it up. I resolved this morning to try to do right, — and then how angry I was. Poor little Maddy, how sorry she looked when I left her."

Toward night he met Maurice, who, with a course laugh stopped him, saying, "what a fellow you must be."

"What do you mean?" asked Antonio.

"You'd better pretend ignorance. What were Lizette and the children crying about all the morning?"

"I didn't know they were crying." He tried to speak indifferently; but the color flew into his face, which his companion noticed with another laugh, and went on.

Yes, Lizette had spoken in a moment of passion, and regretted it as soon as he had gone. She thought of Antonio's kindness, which was now greatly magnified in her eyes when she feared he would take such offence at her rude speech that he would leave her to provide for herself. It had seemed so natural to depend upon him, that she had not before realized that she had no claim upon his time or services.

At the usual hour for him to return, she became so uneasy that she sent the twins out to watch for him, but after waiting until they were weary they returned without him.

It was not until the younger ones had gone to bed, that with a hesitating step he entered. Finding himself weak and faint for want of food, he had chosen to stop at a restaurant and buy some bread and cheese before he went home.

The little girls sprang forward to welcome him, exclaiming, "See how nicely we have fixed the room for you, but how long you have been away."

Lizette stood for a moment steadily regarding him, but seeing that he looked sad instead of angry, gave him her hand, eagerly saying, "I was cross this morning, Antonio, and talked real ugly. I always knew you were fond of us."

The young man sighed as he answered, "I did wrong, too, and I've had a dreadful day."

He held Madelina close to his side and whispered a few words in her ear, when the impulsive child clasped her arms around his neck, and kissed him.

The mother was much pleased at this, and presently took from a basket some broken

pieces of food which she offered him, but he only shook his head.

"Look," cried Beatrice, proudly, "See what I'm studying now," and she held out a small elementary arithmetic ; " how many thumbs have you."

" I know," answered her sister, " I said that in the class to-day."

Antonio laughed as he read over the simple questions which they readily answered. They all grew quite excited over them at last however, and with the aid of the pictures of marbles, birds and men, succeeded in counting how many are one and five, four and seven, &c., &c.

After an hour passed in this way, the children went to bed, and Antonio, notwithstanding an earnest remonstrance from their mother, left the room to follow their example. In truth he wished to be alone and have time to reflect. He wished, too, to pray for pardon for the unchristian spirit he had manifested in the morning, and to implore strength from above to keep the good resolutions he had formed.

His last waking thought was a determination to seek advice of his old friend Mrs. Murray, with regard to all that had caused him uneasiness.

CHAPTER XII.

VISIT TO LIZETTE.

FOR several days Antonio could not carry his new formed purpose into effect. He was determined, if possible, to avoid the occurrence of any scenes like those mentioned in the preceding chapter, and the performance of Andrea's duties, added to his own, gave him little time that he could call his own.

On the next Sabbath, however, as he was waiting in his seat for the little girls, Mrs. Murray touched his arm, and said pleasantly, "I have been talking with your young friends, and want to have some conversation with you."

The lad's countenance expressed his delight. "I should be very glad," he began.

"Can you come this evening?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am?"

Smiling, she bade them adieu, when they

took their accustomed walk to the common to repeat the lessons of the morning, and thus imprint them on their memory.

"Antonio," said Mrs. Murray, when in the evening she had seated him in the small back parlor, "You can understand English so well that I think you ought to attend Church."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Have you thought of any one you should prefer?"

"Father Rainoni has a service occasionally. I always go when he has one. It is much easier for me to think in Italian."

The lady gazed earnestly in his face, and then added, it is a great privilege as well as a duty to meet together and worship God. It is a direct command of Scripture. I think you would be able to understand any of our clergymen."

Antonio had already related to his friend his interest in Father Taylor's meeting. He now, in a hesitating voice, began to tell her his struggles after holiness, the warfare between

his new and high resolves, and the deep sinfulness of his heart. Gaining confidence as he saw her interest, he went on to tell her how he was now situated, and the desire he had to improve his own situation and that of his young friends.

"Is it your wish to return to Italy?" she asked with a smile.

"Certainly, we all expect to go, but"—he hesitated and blushed.

"I cannot give you my advice unless you tell me all that is in your heart, my boy."

"I want to know more first." The words came out with an effort; but when he met her warm smile of approval he took courage to go on.

"I can read a little; but I should like to be able to write and to keep accounts."

"Why not join an evening school? I can put you in the way of entering a good one."

His countenance flushed with pleasure, as he eagerly replied, "Just what I should like."

"I will see Mr. Evans, the teacher, and you

may begin to-morrow night if you choose. In the mean time I will try to form some plan for you to live a little more comfortably. Perhaps I may make a call upon Lizette and induce her to be more tidy."

He shook his head ; "I'm afraid she don't know how, but I'm very sorry to have Madelina and Beatrice grow up in such a place. Since they have been to school, and visited some of their mates, they are quite ashamed of it."

" Well, my boy, don't give way to discouragement, either as to these trials or to the duties of your own heart. Remember, Paul who was honored in doing a great deal for God, had the same warfare between indwelling sin, and a struggle after holiness, so that he says, "to will is present with me ; but how to perform I find not."

" You have a Father in heaven, a pitying Father, who is ready to listen to your prayers and to grant you the strength you need. He loves to have you go freely to him with your troubles, to depend upon him, to trust his pro-

mise that all things shall work for good to those that love him."

"Sometimes that is all the comfort I have," replied the youth, with a deep blush.

"Mamma," cried Ida, running from the parlor as soon as she heard her mother's voice in the hall, "here is the book you said I might give him."

"Yes, dear," taking it with a smile. "This contains a number of short, simple prayers," she added, "one for every day in the week, with a hymn at the end of each prayer."

"Just what I wanted," cried Antonio warmly." Oh, I thank you very much, Miss Ida ; I am so ignorant, ma'am, I can't pray as I want, and that is the reason I could'nt ask Lizette and the children to join with me."

A few days later Mrs. Murray called upon a friend who lived not far from North Street, when the conversation turned upon the organ grinders whose numbers had so rapidly increased.

"I wish to visit their court and see their condition for myself," remarked the lady. "Do

you suppose they would object to my doing so?"

"I think their filth could be the only objection," remarked a gentleman by the name of Fosdick, dryly. "They are not at all fond of being cleansed. I have a little brother, who has often played the hose upon them, yet they never seem to be grateful, but get out of the way as fast as possible."

"I can scarcely blame them for that," answered the lady, laughing heartily. "We each prefer our own method of being cleansed as you call it."

"If you would like to go in spite of what I have said, I will accompany you," suggested Mr. Fosdick. "You would hardly venture alone I presume."

After expressing her gratitude, Mrs. Murray declared her desire to go at once.

Passing through the covered alley before mentioned, they soon found themselves in the narrow court. Men, women, and children were standing idly about, of whom she inquired for the family of Andrea Ritti.

But for some time she could not make herself understood. At length, pointing to a bright, handsome boy who was gazing in the faces of the strangers, she made a woman understand that she had come to see children,—many children,—twins, Madelina and Beatrice.

The woman caught the idea, and nodding her head, pointed to a door up the second flight of stairs, using, perhaps, the only English words she knew, ‘things there.’”

“ Grammar seems to be below par,” remarked Mr. Fosdick, in a dry tone. “ Children were classed with nouns in my day.”

With an admonitory shake of the head, Mrs. Murray ventured to knock at the door.

“ Alas ! ” said she, in a low voice, “ the half has not been told me.” Never had she imagined that persons within a mile of her own dwelling could live so. The room, as I have already described it, was small, and it was so crowded with persons and “ things,” that the young man felt that he ought to beg pardon of their guide, for criticizing her grammar.

On the bed sat a woman with grey hair, mother to Terese, the wife of Maurice Ritti ; the latter person leaning against the post, and talking with her as they entered.

Lizette sat in the middle of the filthy floor, which was so begrimed with dirt that it was impossible to tell whether it had been painted. Her foot was on the rocker of Silvio's cradle, who she acquainted the lady by signs was ill. Nora and the little Maurice, their faces unwashed, their hair uncombed, were dabbling in a puddle of dirty suds in the corner.

They seemed to have recently partaken of their noor-day meal, for crumbs of bread and pieces of refuse meat, and greasy bones, were lying on the table in the midst of old clothes, shoes, and broken ware.

Casting his keen eye around the apartment, he pointed to the tambourines hanging from the wall, " their Catechisms," he remarked with a twinkling eye.

Mrs. Murray, drawing up her clothes from contact with the floor, inquired for the twin

girls, and was told "gone—school—learn English," evidently priding herself on this circumstance.

The lady's sympathies were fully enlisted for Antonio, when she saw that the woman, who sat on the bed, rested her bare foot on the unwashed spider or gridle which had been thrust there'out of the way

"Do you all live here?" she asked in amazement.

"Yes, lady, yes," was the contented reply.
"Him no," pointing to Maurice.

"But where do you sleep?" assisting to convey her meaning by signs.

She smilingly pointed to the small room, or ante-room as Mr. Fosdick gravely remarked.

Picking her way, the lady ventured to take a peep into this apartment. The sight almost took away her breath.

"I find the air here delightful," said the much amused young man, trying to catch her eye. "There is a double advantage in it; being so thick we cannot fall down."

The shelves which Antonio had taken so much pains to arrange, were crowded with miscellaneous articles, too numerous to mention. The straw bed lying uncovered, except by a few ragged bed-clothes on the floor, with Andrea's old hat and coat hanging from a nail, over the bundle of rags which served for a pillow.

"What can be done?" said the lady to herself, as she heaved a deep sigh. "No wonder poor Antonio feels as he does."

On one corner of the shelf she saw the book of pictures Ida had sent to the children, and rolled up in a paper near it, a small bundle which looked as if it might contain some other books.

Pointing to these, she motioned to Lizette that she wished to see them, and then gave the woman to understand that she was the donor.

Lizette's countenance brightened at once. She gazed with new interest at her visitors, rattling off a strange medley of English and Italian, of the meaning of which they could get

no clue, except that Madelina and Beatrice prized the book, pressing it to her breast ; that Antonio and they all thanked her, for her kindness to them.

All at once she began to cry, and went on to say, that his brother, nodding to Maurice, was her husband ; that he had recently died, and left her with all these children ; that Antonio went around with the organ and brought home “no much money.”

The lady showed that she sympathized, and then left, feeling very much discouraged about her proteges. Indeed, she was obliged to confess that a feeling of disgust crept over her whenever she thought of the twins or Antonio inhabiting such a filthy apartment.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE POISONED CHILDREN.

JUST before she reached home she saw an organ grinder accompanied by a child, apparently about ten or twelve years of age ; the little girl was keeping time to the music with her tambourine, occasionally shaking the bells attached to the instrument. Her face had a piteous, wan expression, that went to the lady's heart. She stopped a moment as if to speak, and then passed on. But even after she had entered her own house, she stood at the window to watch the child.

On observing them more closely, she perceived that the man's countenance was stamped with grief, and that while he played to two small children who stood on the steps, the tears dropped continually on his coat sleeve.

The sad and sorrowing ever found in Mrs.

Murray a sympathizing friend. She felt in this instance, that there must be some more than ordinary cause for grief; and hastily laying aside her outer garments, she sent out the cook to call them in.

She was pleased to find that the man could readily understand her. The child gazed curiously about the kitchen, and took a cake when it was offered her, but presently burst into a loud cry.

Her father drew his sleeve across his eyes, and then said, in a tone of apology, "she's grieving for the chilfer, ma'am."

"And where are the children?"

"All dead — three of 'em." He choked and coughed to keep back his tears.

"Oh, dear! dear!" sobbed the little girl.

"She misses 'em," added the man in a broken voice. "They went off so sudden — all of them together." This time his chin quivered, and he could scarcely control himself, as he noticed that tears filled the lady's eyes.

"Is she all you have left?" asked Mrs. Murray.

He nodded assent.

“ What was the matter with them ? ”

After a moment he composed himself to give her the following sad account:

“ He and his family lived in the basement room of a house where there are about a dozen other families, one of whom occupied the same apartment as themselves. They were terribly troubled with rats, which gnawed their clothes, shoes and whatever they could get at. They complained at last to the landlord, who told them to get some rats'-bane, and poison them. He gave them an order on the apothecary, who would not otherwise have been justified in selling it. They procured a small powder done up in a sealed paper, which the apothecary told the man to be very careful of, or it would poison his family as well as the rats. The woman scattered the white powder on a piece of bread, as he directed her, and threw the paper away. The next day she left her children a short time alone ; when she came back, the youngest, nearly a year old, was already dead,

and the others dying. When the physician came he found the little paper in the hand of one of them, with the apothecary's mark on it.

"How came this here?" he asked; "it is poison, which has killed them."

"They're all gone, ma'am," concluded the poor, stricken father. "The mother does nothing but cry. They're buried in one coffin. She grieves terribly," motioning toward his young companion.

Mrs. Murray was deeply affected, and her tears flowed with theirs.

She ascertained that he was acquainted with Antonio, and that even among his companions, the youth had caused himself to be highly respected by his sober, consistent character. She talked, too, of Lizette and her recent affliction, of the beautiful twins, and recommended him to send his child to school with them, that she might learn to read, and then having paid them liberally for the time they had been delayed, she asked, "Is it not painful for you to grind the organ, when your heart is so sad?"

"It means nothing to me," answered the poor man. "I don't listen to it; I'm hearing my little childer calling me, but when I go home they're gone."

For several weeks Antonio attended the evening school, becoming so much interested in his studies, that through the day he scarcely forgot them. As he stood in the street, mechanically turning the crank of his organ, his mind was carrying on the calculations which had occupied him the previous evening, or repeating to himself lessons in spelling and geography.

With one exercise a week in writing, his progress could not be very rapid. He was often tempted to renounce his daily employment altogether, and devote his whole time and energies to the acquirement of knowledge. Mrs. Murray, and even Father Rainoni advised him to be patient, improve as fast as he could, and hope for some favorable change in his condition.

One evening, while making a call with her husband, Mrs. Murray overheard a gentleman saying he had advertised for a boy to take a vacant place in his store.

"Why wouldn't Antonio do?" she asked, interrupting herself in a remark to the lady.

"Who is Antonio?"

"Oh! a protege of my wife," replied Mr. Murray, with a smile.

"What can he do? I mean how well qualified is he for such a place?"

"He is thoroughly honest and faithful; beyond that I cannot say, except that he has a most ardent desire to improve himself and his condition."

"Where is he now?"

"At this hour he is probably at an evening school. During the day he carries round an organ."

The gentleman threw back his head with a hearty laugh.

Mrs. Murray was conscious that her color was rising, but she replied warmly, "He is not

a common youth. He has a small patrimony left him by his parents, who are deceased, and will probably return to Italy ; but he wishes to fit himself for usefulness. By his persevering, almost unaided efforts, he has learned to read intelligibly, and was taking lessons second hand, from one of our public schools, when I recommended him to join Mr. Evans' evening school. When I first knew him, he could scarcely speak a word of English. Now he is one of our most interesting scholars in the Mission School, and I trust a sincere Christian."

"He has a warm friend in you, at any rate," replied the merchant. "You have plead his cause so well, that I feel quite curious to see him ; so if you think it worth the while to send him to me, I will see what I can do to help him along. But, by the way, is he healthy and strong ? That is quite indispensable in my store, where there is so much lifting."

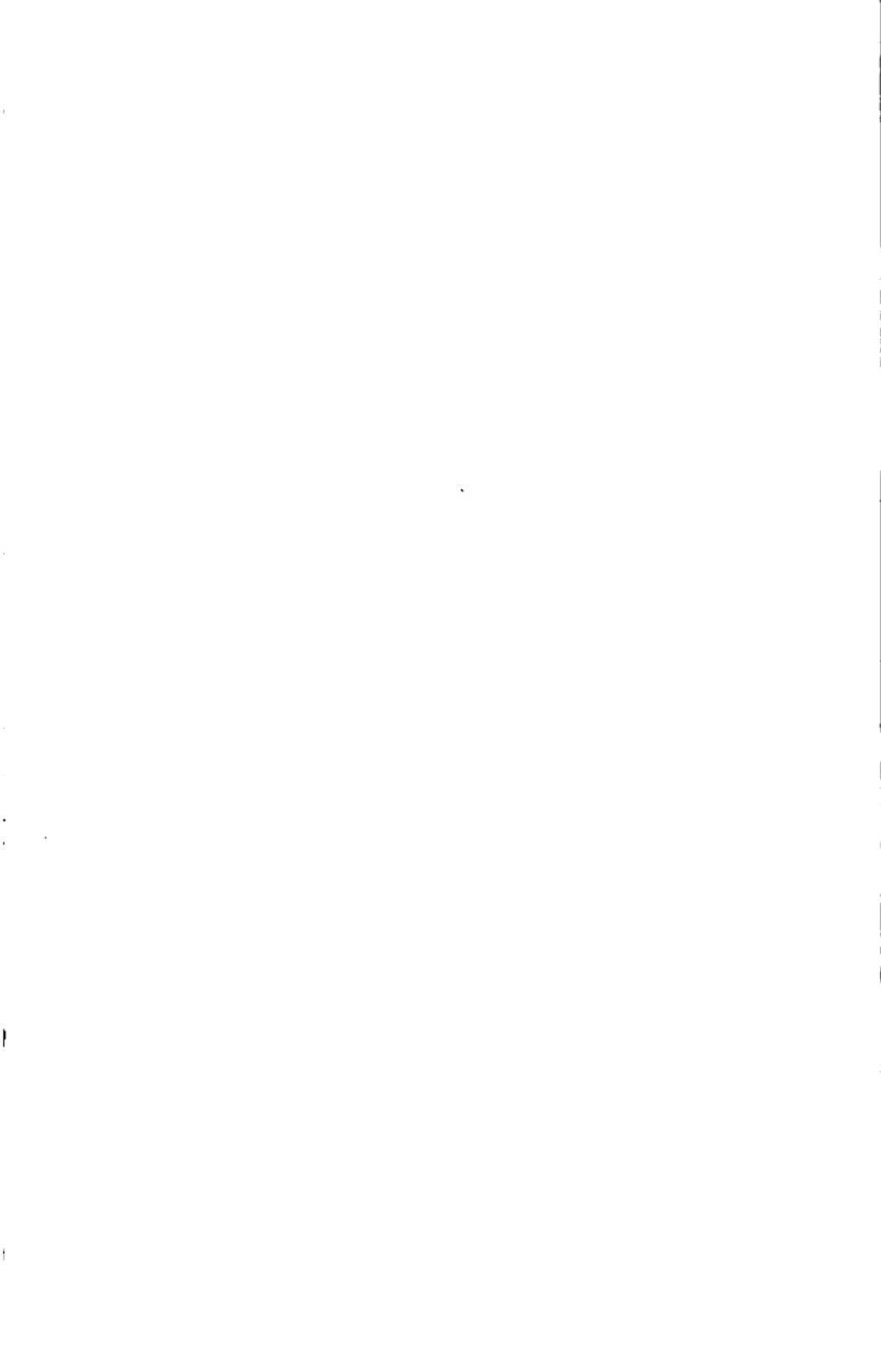
"He is a stout, noble-looking boy ; but I will say no more. You shall judge for yourself."

Two day's later, when Antonio called at the gentleman's store, wondering at the message he had received from Mrs. Murray, he found himself undergoing a severe scrutiny from the merchant, both as to his age, mode of life, his present employment, and his wishes for the future.

On the latter suggestion he had formed no definite plan. Though nearly seventeen, he had so long lived on from day to day, without daring to expect or hope for any change, that he hardly knew what would be his choice. But when, after nearly an hour's conversation, the gentleman offered him a place in his store, promising that his evening studies should not be interrupted, the bright flush that suffused his cheek, proved that the proposal was welcomed with delight. The sum of twenty dollars, which Mr. Norton informed him would be his salary for one month, the term proposed for trial, seemed enormous, and so far beyond what he ought to expect, that he could not deem it right for him to allow the gentleman to suppose he expected such high wages.



Antonio and the Merchant,—p. 150.



A hearty laugh was the merchant's only reply, and the lad left the store, to make his way as quickly as possible to Mount Vernon street, and express his gratitude for Mrs. Murray's kindness.

The remainder of the day was passed in providing himself a suit of stout working clothes, for he was to enter upon his duties immediately, and in reconciling Lizette to the change.

She wept, wrung her hands, and implored him not to leave her ; bade the children plead with him ; but though it was one of the most trying scenes of his life, he remained firm to his promise to his kind friend.

"Go then," she exclaimed at last, "go ; and when we are starved, you will remember it was your work. Oh, that it should have come to this ! "

In vain he explained to her that the organ he hired would be let, and she would still have the rent from it ; that the money she already received, would support her in the manner she now lived. The idea of purchasing instead of begging food, seemed to her like the most wasteful extravagance.

She was unwilling, too, to lose her influence over him, and predicted that if he abandoned his employment and went into a store, he would feel himself quite above his country people.

"I have long been ashamed of living as I have done," answered the lad with some warmth, "and I do wish, Lizette, for the sake of the children, if you don't care for yourself, that you would keep the room more tidy. I can scarcely look Mrs. Murray in the face ever since I knew she had been here."

This was a sore subject to the woman, and she grew very angry. Maurice came in at this crisis, and to Antonio's surprise, took his part, called his sister-in-law an ungrateful fool, to expect the lad to support her in idleness, was glad he had the spunk to assert his own rights, and at last offered to relieve him of the care of his brother's family.

"To be sure," said he, "you can get food for them when you get your own, before it is time for you to open the store."

"No; I cannot do that," he replied firmly, mindful of his promise to Mrs. Murray, who was sure Mr. Norton would be justly displeased that any one in his employ, should beg his bread. "No; I shall pay for my breakfast, and Lizette is not so poor that she cannot pay for hers."

He longed to say that he would pay her from his wages, more than she would be likely to spend, but he had been advised to give no pledge for the present, as he might probably find other ways of being of more real service to them.

Madelina and Beatrice listened eagerly to all that passed, the former leaning against Antonio, and pressing her hand into his, while the latter echoed her mother's cry, and seemed to consider it a personal insult that he thought of leaving them. He tried to soothe her, but her angry tears did not affect him like Madelina's stifled sobs.

CHAPTER XIV.

ANTONIO'S NEW PROJECT.

WITH the commencement of his new duties, Antonio seemed to himself to be beginning a new life, so unlike the desultory one he had heretofore led, without any higher object than merely to gain the means to live on from day to day, that he could scarcely realize his personal identity. It was indeed true that the order, regularity and promptness indispensable in the store, were at first irksome. For a few weeks he was often tempted to give it up, though he resolved never to return to his old business. But Mr. Norton who, without seeming to do so, watched him closely, sometimes dropped a word of encouragement, so that at the close of the month of trial it would have been a sad disappointment to him to be dismissed.

It was his first business in the morning to go to the house of his employer, obtain the keys, and open the store. This he was required to sweep and dust before the clerks came in from breakfast, when he was allowed half an hour for his own. He obtained his meals at a restaurant, in the same street, always purchasing the simplest food, from preference. During the day, his duties consisted in loading or removing from the trucks, bales of goods belonging to the store, going of errands for the book-keeper, or clerks, and assisting the porter in hoisting and lowering goods into the different stories where they belonged.

At five, his duties for the day were ended, he received the keys from the porter, carried them to Mr. Norton's house, and then having eaten his supper, hurried home, as he still called Lizette's apartment, to pass an hour or two with the children before it was time for his evening lesson. He still lodged in his old place, but determined soon to make a change in this respect.

For some weeks he had been maturing a plan whereby he hoped to benefit his country people, and which he was only waiting to mention to Father Rainoni and Mrs. Murray, until he was permanently engaged by Mr. Norton.

His heart beat anxiously the day his month of trial expired. Every time his employer passed him, he expected to be summoned to the counting-room. But by no word or sign did the gentleman intimate his intention for the future.

Toward night he left the store, but returned just as the porter was shutting up, and calling Antonio to him, said, "I shall remain a few minutes, and wish you to remain with me."

He seated himself in his arm chair, and pointing the youth to a stool, said, "Well, my lad, I suppose you remember that our engagement expires to-night. How do you like the business?"

"Very much, sir; better now than at first."

"Because you are becoming accustomed to working by system. I foresaw this difficulty;

but you have done well — very well, considering your inexperience. I am satisfied with the result of the trial, and am ready to engage you for the remainder of the year, making an advance of four dollars a month upon our original agreement."

Antonio's eyes grew bright, and he tried to speak, but the words choked him, and at last he could only falter out, "I'll try to do my best, sir."

"I have no doubt of it, my lad," said the merchant, with a smile, "and now, how do you succeed with your studies?"

"Not as fast as I should like, sir. But Mr. Evans says I ought to be satisfied."

"I suppose you are learning to write and keep accounts."

"Yes, sir, I have been so long used to adding up, I find arithmetic easy; but I don't succeed so well in writing. I ought to have begun younger."

"That can only be acquired by practise. If you choose to do so, you may remain here an

hour at night after we shut up, and spend it in writing."

"Thank you, sir, I shall like it very much."

Mr. Norton opened his pocket-book, counted out twenty dollars, and passed it to Antonio, saying archly, "I suppose you can hardly sign your name to a receipt as yet."

"Yes, sir, if you will make out the bill. I can do that,"

"And very well, too," added the gentleman, as after a few moments the young man presented his carefully signed name.

"I have practised on that a good deal," responded the boy, coloring. "I can't write anything else as well."

"Now, whenever you want money for your expenses, apply to the book-keeper, and I advise you to keep a private book of accounts. In that way you can always tell how much you have spent and how much is due you."

It was with a light heart and elastic step, that our young friend hastened to the restaurant, for his supper, and then sought Father Rainoni, at his home.

The old gentleman was confined to his room by a sudden indisposition, but directed that Antonio should come to him there. His kind eyes beamed with pleasure, when he heard of the success of the youth, but he listened with still deeper attention, when the lad poured out his ardent desires to be of use to his people; to raise them from their ignorance, degradation and uncleanness.

In the conversation which followed, the Priest proved himself to be truly a kindred spirit with Fenelon, Massillon, Paschal and Thomas à Kempis. He highly approved the plan Antonio had formed, and promised to use all his influence to induce the Italian children to profit by it. He urged upon the youth a strict attention to his own religious duties, that by frequent confession of his sins, by prayer and close communion with God, he might continue and increase his usefulness, and become a great and good man among his people.

Finding it was still early, Antonio hurried across the city to see Mrs. Murray; but she

was absent, and he was obliged to defer consulting her with reference to his new project, until another night.

He took the opportunity, therefore, to purchase some small additions to his wardrobe, and also dresses for Madelina and Beatrice.

When he reached the room where Mr. Evans taught his evening class, he told the gentleman he wished to learn how to keep an account of his expenses.

"Here is a small blank book I will give you," said the teacher, "and you shall begin to fill it to-night."

Lizette was quite as much pleased as he expected, with the pretty dresses, and insisted upon awakening the twins to thank him. They had sat up very late waiting to see him, and at last cried at the disappointment.

They shared the straw bed in the small room, with the widowed mother of Terese, and when they were called, rubbed their eyes, Beatrice crying out in an impatient tone, "I wont wake up, I'm sleepy," and seemed so cross, that her mother angrily bade her be still.

The next evening Antonio found Mrs. Murray at home, and eagerly imparted to her his wishes for the good of the Italian children.

"They have now no instruction at all," he said. "Only two or three in our court, with the exception of Madelina and Beatrice, go to school, and Father Rainoni cannot prevail upon the parents to send them. They complain at first that the little ones are too young, and when they are older send them into the streets to earn a few pennies, with their tambourines."

"I know I, myself, am very ignorant," he added, with a deep blush, "but as they don't understand English, I may perhaps do them some good by repeating what I learn at the Mission School."

"A capital plan," exclaimed the lady, her countenance glowing with pleasure; "but where do you propose to have them meet?"

"I suppose they would not be willing to go out of the court, or the parents would not allow it. I mean to hire a room for myself, now

that I am able to afford it, and perhaps that will do. Every child who comes must bring a stool or chair.'

"That will do exactly ; and when it is cold weather we must contrive some way to warm the room. Have you any furniture for it?"

"Not yet. I have a large chest which belonged to my mother, where I keep all that belongs to me, and it serves for a table and chair. I mean to have some when I can earn them, and keep my room tidy. Don't you think, ma'am, it would be a good rule not to let the children come in until they are washed ? "

"Yes, indeed !" she answered, laughing ; "and I'm sure it would be promotive of their health. When you have hired your room, come to me ; I think I can find some furniture stowed away in the attic, which might be useful to you."

"I don't know how soon I can obtain a room by myself. I know they will laugh at me, and call me proud and disobliging ; but I

don't think it is respectable for me to live so. I hope to get the landlord to paper and paint the room afresh."

"That is right ; the example, I hope, will induce some others to imitate you."

Antonio colored and cast down his eyes. "I don't know but it's wrong, ma'am ; but I sometimes think I could pray more earnestly if I were in a different place."

"I have no doubt of it ; I fear I should not be able to collect my thoughts at all. You know we have direct commands on this subject. In the Old Testament, we find cleanliness and neatness indispensable to acceptableness in religious observances. The command to be clean is many times repeated. 'Be clean and change your garments. 'Purify yourselves, and on the seventh day ye shall be clean ; ye may not eat of holy things until ye are clean.' And in the New Testament we are told to 'let all things be done decently and in order.'"

As Antonio had expected, his desire to have a room to himself created quite an excitement

in the little community. Lizette even turned against him and called him proud, while many of his neighbors advised him to leave his people altogether, and board at a hotel. Some of the younger organ grinders who were envious at his success, though they were too indolent to imitate him, and endeavor to improve their condition, used every means to annoy him. But he bore all their insults so patiently, always rendering good for evil, that at last they were prevented by mere shame, from farther abuse.

Maurice Ritti from the first stood his friend, and fought many a battle for him while he was absent at the store. He even offered to see the landlord, and secure the use of a room on favorable terms ; but this Antonio chose to do for himself.

It was nearly a month, however, before all his arrangements were completed, and his room thoroughly cleansed, newly papered and painted, with a lock and key in order, was delivered into his keeping.

CHAPTER XV.

ANTONIO'S SCHOOLE.

“**N**OW,” said Antonio to Father Rainoni, “I am ready to commence my school.”

In the course of the week the Priest visited the court, and told the children it was high time they were learning something; that Antonio was willing to teach them; and they must be attentive to his instructions. He urged the parents, too, not to neglect this opportunity for the good of their little ones; that the excuses of their not having clothes suitable to come to church, could not be urged here, for provided their dresses and persons were clean, they would be admitted.

The time appointed for the first gathering was half-past ten, directly after his return

from the Mission School; but long before that hour a group of bright-eyed girls and boys, from the ages of twelve to four, whose faces and hands shone with the unwonted scrubbing they had received, stood at the entrance to the court, eagerly watching for their young teacher.

At length he appeared, in company with Madelina and Beatrice, and was greeted with a perfect shout of welcome.

"We're all ready," they exclaimed in Italian; "look, we are very clean."

"See me," cried a little fellow tottering up the stairs. "I look pretty, I got on new dress."

"Wait a minute until I can unlock the door," he said, as they pressed closely around him.

"Oh, how nice! how pleasant!" exclaimed Beatrice, who was in one of her happiest moods.

"But we have forgotten to bring our chairs," said Madelina, more quietly.

The children stood for a moment gazing about them in open-mouthed wonder. Many of them had never seen anything so neat and home-like as that small, well-ordered apartment. A narrow cottage bedstead stood in one corner, covered with a dark blue, woven quilt. Against the wall a table was placed, on which lay the few books which Antonio possessed. The chest before spoken of, and a couple of chairs, which, with the table, were a present from Mrs. Murray, completed the furniture of the apartment.

The teacher looked around on his sixteen scholars, and smiled. They were taking their first, and he hoped a not unimportant lesson, in neatness and order. He did not feel disposed to abridge it; but after the hum of surprise had somewhat ceased, and he had hung his hat carefully on the hook prepared for it, he said: "Yes, we must have some seats; let us see how many we shall want. There are two chairs, and four little ones can sit on the chest."

"I can sit here."

"And I."

So saying, two of the largest pupils threw themselves on the bed.

"No," said Antonio, firmly; "no one must sit on the bed in my room. We must borrow some chairs."

When they were all seated, he told them that he had long wanted to do them good, and hoped now they were to spend an hour together, that they would be very quiet, and listen attentively to what he told them.

The Mission School was always opened with prayer, and our young friend, after many a struggle with himself, had decided that he ought to do the same. But this morning, Mrs. Murray had advised him, until they became somewhat accustomed to the exercise, to commence with the Lord's prayer.

The unwonted sound of devotion, attracted quite a crowd of men and women to the entry, and seeing no appearance of the forms to which they had been accustomed, began to laugh.

"Cross yourself; go down on your knees," cried out one mother, putting her head inside the door. "Cross yourself, I say."

"I can't teach them, if you call off their attention," said Antonio, his face flushing with anger. Then pushing them somewhat rudely from the passage way, he closed and locked the door.

The next minute he was so ashamed of what he had done ; so humbled that he had allowed such a trifle to vex him, that he could scarcely control his voice to go on with his instructions.

After a time, he became more composed, and, drawing a chair to the centre of the room, he began to tell them the story of the Saviour's birth, his midnight flight into Egypt with his parents, his dutiful conduct toward them, his ministry, the miracles he wrought, his sufferings, the cruel mocking and scourging of the Jews, and at last, his terrible death on the cross.

Not a word had been spoken by the chil-

dren, as he went on, his voice trembling with interest and emotion. He was just about to explain to them that Jesus had willingly endured all this for them, when he was interrupted by a loud knock at the door.

He approached it in quite a different spirit from the last time, and was greatly surprised to see Father Rainoni.

The good man came in smiling, and, taking his seat in Antonio's chair, told him to go on with his instructions.

But this the young and inexperienced teacher found it impossible to do. He could only stammer, and appeared, at length, so greatly embarrassed, that some of the older scholars began to laugh.

A frown, and a decided stamp, from Father Rainoni, soon restored order, when Antonio bethought himself that Madelina and Beatrice might be induced to sing a little hymn they had learned in the Mission School.

This Beatrice was very much delighted to do, that she might show the priest how much

sne was in advance of her companions ; and with the help of Antonio and her sister, sung to the English words,

“ I want to be an Angel,
And with the Angels stand.”

“ That is very good,” said Father Rainoni, with a smile. “ You must learn, and you, and you,” he continued, pointing to one and another among the scholars. “ You must learn the Catechism, too. You are too ignorant; you know nothing. Marie, (addressing the largest girl,) you must not be married till you learn the Catechism. Remember now; and I shall tell Justini the same.”

Marie cast down her eyes, and blushed. Poor girl ! young as she was, she was already betrothed to one of the organ grinders.

“ Now I shall go ; when you have learned more, I shall come and hear you. Good bye ! ”

He patted the young teacher affectionately, on the shoulder, saying “ God bless you,” and then walked slowly down the stairs. The men

and women crowded into the entries, and around the doors, pausing in their conversation until he was out of hearing.

It required some minutes to bring the little class to order again, but Antonio's heart was in the work. He had anticipated many discouragements, and determined, with the help of God, to persevere. He tried to be patient until the tittering and whispering had ceased, and then endeavored to lead them back to the subject of the lesson.

"I'd rather learn to sing like Madelina," said one, sweet, childish voice.

"If you're quiet until the lesson is through, I will teach you," replied Antonio, struggling against impatience. "Father Rainoni says you must learn the Catechism; I will teach you the first command to-day."

At the end of fifteen minutes, they had actually committed to memory the first commandment, which the teacher had endeavored to explain to them, and he scarcely ever had known a happier moment than when in perfect

harmony they repeated, in a serious tone, the sacred words, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

Quite encouraged by their success, they gave their undivided attention to the next exercise, which was committing the hymn the twins had sung, in order that they might sing it. Line by line, time after time, he repeated one verse, until all could join; then followed the music, which was far more easy, and in which Madelina and Beatrice, with their sweet, powerful voices, were able to help him greatly.

Once more the parents gathered at the door, and Antonio, finding them really interested, allowed the children to repeat, for their benefit, the song they had learned. Then reminding them he should expect they would remember all he had told them about the Saviour, and be able to relate the story to him on the next Sabbath, he bade each one take the chair which belonged to her, and go home.

The hour which followed, he passed alone in his chamber. He felt that he had great cause

for gratitude, that his feeble efforts had been attended with such success.

"I wish," said he to himself, "that there was some one older, and more experienced than I am, to take my place, and let me assist in the work ; but, as there is not, I must ask God to help me, and do the best I can. Oh, how happy I should be, if I could do good to one of these children. Mrs. Murray says I have it in my power to effect a great change here, that my being one of them, will entitle me to their confidence, and especially as I have Father Rainoni's influence. Perhaps she is right ; but I wish I was better qualified !"

He sighed heavily, as he reflected on the impatience he had exhibited at the interference of the parents. "First of all," he said, "I must watch my own heart ; I must be more humble. I felt proud of having such a nice room, and proud of being a teacher. Oh, God, forgive me !"

After reading several passages of Scripture,

he bowed the knee, and sought the blessing of his Father in heaven, on his new enterprise, pardon and peace for himself through the Beloved, and then sought the children in Lizette's apartment.

He was much delighted to find them engaged in teaching Nora, and one of her little companions, to sing the hymn just taught in the school.

As he entered, Beatrice exclaimed, "Oh, Antonio, Nora must go to school, too ; she is old enough ; she can sing very well."

The young man took the child, dirty and ragged as she was, upon his knee, and heard her childish notes.

"Do you remember, Beatrice," he asked, "the story of a little Missionary the Superintendent told us about ? You can do good, you see ; you can be a little Missionary."

"Are you a great Missionary ?" asked Madelina, gazing earnestly in his face.

"Oh, no ! " he answered, laughing, "not very great ; but I'm trying to do a little good," he added, more humbly.

Since Antonio had abandoned the business of organ grinding, Lizette had never treated him as cordially as she had formerly done. Sometimes, when he addressed her, she would answer quite angrily, and then, again, she would be sullen, for several days together. But, to day, she treated him with great affection, brushed out a chair, quite carefully, for him to occupy, and talked cheerfully about the prospect of the new school.

Possibly, the remarks of Father Rainoni, as he passed through the court, that Antonio was a good youth, and they must help him, may have had some effect on her, and caused her to wish to retain her influence over him. At any rate, he was thankful to see her old friendliness revived, and, during the hour which he spent in her room, before dinner, rendered himself as agreeable as possible.

CHAPTER XVI.

ANTONIO'S TRIAL.

MR. Norton kept a wholesale dry goods store. He employed a book-keeper, four salesmen, a porter, and Antonio. It was an old stand, occupied for many years by the gentleman's father, and was doing a large, flourishing business.

Mr. Norton was an honest, upright, Christian man, belonging to the same church as Mr. and Mrs. Murray. He was considered a shrewd, though not very energetic man of business, easy and amiable in disposition, and a very kind master. As we have seen, in the case of Antonio, he was generous in his treatment of those in his employ, and exercised a general supervision over their character and habits.

This confidence in the young organ grinder

had been early awakened by his conscientious discharge of the duties assigned him, and by his strict regard for truth.

During the first week of the lad's trial at the store, everything was new and strange to him, and though he did his best, he often fell short of the standard. The porter, who was a thoroughbred Yankee, by the name of David, took a great liking to the lad, and willingly made up his deficiencies.

One day, Mr. Norton mounted to the third story, where Antonio was at work, and praised the neatness and regularity with which a large quantity of new goods had been piled on the shelves. "You're working into the business finely, my lad," he said, approvingly. "Much sooner than I expected."

Antonio's face was crimson ; he tried to gather courage to speak, but before he could do so, the gentleman passed on, and the opportunity was gone.

"I'll see just how they're done," said he, to himself ; "and have them right next time.

I'm sorry I didn't speak at once, but he's gone now."

Yet Antonio's conscience was too tender to rest easy, even under so light a burden as taking praise to himself which rightfully belonged to another. He no longer ran nimbly up and down the long flights of stairs, nor whistled merrily at his work in the loft; and, at last, became so self-condemned and miserable, that he took his station near the counting-room, and the moment the merchant was alone, presented himself before him. His face was intensely flushed, and his manner painfully confused.

Mr. Norton gazed in astonishment.

"I want to tell you, sir," faltered the youth, "that the porter piled those goods up stairs. I wasn't stowing them right, and he showed me."

"Oh! he did, hey? Well, that's all right." He had entirely forgotten to what the boy alluded.

"You thought I did them, sir, and praised me for learning so quickly. I ought to have told you then, but —"

"Well, why did'nt you," inquired the gentleman, growing every moment more interested.

"At first, I thought I would'nt, for I meant to do the next in the same way, and then when I remembered how wrong that would be, you had gone down."

Mr. Norton turned quickly to the table, where a sudden cough, for a short time occupied his attention. Then he said, "You have begun right, Antonio. I shall think no less of you for your voluntary confession."

The youth bowed gratefully, and went out, his heart bounding again.

A great number of daily and weekly papers, for which Mr. Norton subscribed, were brought to the store, and, after being read, were thrown into a box in one corner of the counting room. These it was Antonio's business to carry away, and he was informed by the porter, that they belonged to him; that Mr. Norton, and his father before him, had allowed the youngest in his employ, to have the waste paper, which he could sell, or dispose of as he pleased.

David informed him that a man came occasionally, to buy junk, as it was called, and that he had better collect it all, in some place out of the way, and have it ready for him.

This he did, and was quite surprised to find that he was offered two dollars and forty-one cents for it. At the Mission School, he had already tasted the pleasure of bestowing his mite, and resolved that the amount he thus received, should be devoted to benevolent purposes ; thus he entered it in his account book, where every item was mentioned.

In another chapter, I have stated that Mr. Norton gave Antonio the privilege of remaining, after the store was shut up, to practice his lessons in writing, a privilege the youth was not slow to avail himself of.

One afternoon, the merchant himself remained, and, passing by the desk of the book-keeper, where the youth had stationed himself, saw him take a small book from his breast pocket, and proceed to make an entry in it.

"That's right," he exclaimed, "that's a good plan. May I look at it ? "

"Oh yes, sir!" replied Antonio, holding it eagerly forward. "Mr. Evans gave me the book, and told me how to make the entries."

"You have quite a family to support, I see," remarked Mr. Norton, with a smile. "I understood Mrs. Murray to say you were an orphan, and without relations. Here is 'Dress for Madeline, 60 cents; dress for Beatrice, 60 cents; cape for Lizette's dress, etc., etc.'

"Those are the twins who go with me to the Mission School, and Lizette is their mother, who took care of me when my mother died. She is well supported now, by the organs her husband owned. Maurice Ritti, her husband's brother, rents them for her."

"Oh, these are the beautiful twins Ida Murray told me about. You must ask them to come here, and see you, some day. I, myself, would like a peep at them."

"Thank you, sir," replied the youth, greatly pleased at this reference to his young friends. "Is that entry right, sir," pointing to the one concerning the sale of the junk. "David told

me it was usage here, but I have thought several times I ought to hear it from you."

"Certainly ; oh, yes ! that's right, I wish all my clerks were as conscientious as you seem to be."

Antonio wondered at the sigh which accompanied this remark, but he was destined to understand it too soon.

The head salesman was an elderly man, who had been in the firm while the elder Mr. Norton was living. His name was Crooker, or Cruiker. He felt for his young employee, not only the affection of a brother, but something of the tenderness of a parent.

Next to him, and the one Antonio liked best, was Henry Bidwell, an active, enterprising, young man, full of wit and humor, and often boasted of being able to sell more goods than any salesman on the street. This was true, or nearly so, and even Mr. Cruiker advised his employers to increase his salary rather than lose him.

From the first, Mr. Bidwell had been kind

to Antonio, and on the occasion of his being married within a few weeks from the time the youth entered the store, he had brought him a generous slice of cake, with his wife's compliments, and an invitation to call upon her.

He never passed the young Italian, without a pleasant nod, or a friendly word, often introducing him to the customers, when he took them up where the lad was at work.

Not conceiving any possible, interested motive for this conduct, it was natural that Antonio should be grateful for it, and glad of an opportunity to reciprocate the kindness.

Since he had been allowed to remain by himself at the store, Mr. Bidwell had, in two or three instances returned, making the excuse that he had been so driven through the day, that he had forgotten to make some necessary entries in the books.

The day following his short conversation with Mr. Norton, he noticed that the gentleman appeared grave, and care worn, that he passed a couple of hours with the book-keep-

er and Mr. Cruiker, in the counting-room, the door remaining closed, and that no one in the establishment seemed to be in his usual spirits, except Mr. Bidwell. This gentleman's laugh was louder, and his jokes more frequent than ever.

Once, after attending a customer to the door, he leaned his head on his hand, and Antonio heard him sigh repeatedly.

"Are you ill?" he ventured to inquire, as he saw, or fancied that the salesman grew suddenly pale.

"Oh, no!" replied the other, instantly rousing himself, "only a distracting headache. That customer was so hard to please, but I made him run up a good bill; see here, almost five hundred dollars."

The young man expressed sympathy with his suffering, in a tone so evidently sincere, that the other turned toward him, and, laying his head on the lad's shoulder, said, eagerly, "I really believe you care for me."

"Yes, indeed," was the astonished reply.

“And if I should ever get into trouble, you'd help me out.”

“With all my heart.”

Mr. Bidwell started, and colored violently, as a voice near them, said, “a gentleman below is inquiring for you, sir.”

It was Mr. Cruiker, who, after some slight direction to Antonio, followed the other down stairs.

That evening, the youth was just preparing to write, after the others had left the store, when the outer door opened suddenly, and Mr. Cruiker entered, and cast a quick, keen glance around.

He walked into the counting room, unlocked and re-locked the safe, then approaching the desk, where Antonio was at work, said, “I want to ask you a few questions; and, first, what were you and Bidwell talking about to-day?”

The youth repeated the conversation, word for word, which had made some impression upon him.

"Has he ever been here after the store was left into your care?"

"Yes, sir, a few times."

"What did he do?"

"Made some entries he said he'd forgotten."

"Ah!" said the clerk, with a start, "I think you are honest and faithful to your employer," fixing his keen eyes on the lad.

"I mean to be, sir," not shrinking from the gaze.

"I wish to put your endeavor to please him, to the test. If Bidwell comes here again, I wish you to watch him, without seeming to do so."

Antonio's face crimsoned. "I can't do that, sir, he's very kind to me."

"Very well," said the other, sternly. "You are one of those who are grateful in words, but not in deeds."

"I will do anything I can to show my gratitude to my employer, sir; but surely he cannot wish me to be a spy." His trembling voice told how keenly he felt the rebuke.

"This is exactly the service he asks of you. Will you do it, asking no questions?"

"Yes, sir, if he wishes it;" was the faltering reply.

"That is all; good night."

When he was gone, Antonio rested his head on his arms, shaking with agitation. "What can he mean, and how can I do this?" he asked himself. "Oh, how mean I shall feel to watch and report the actions of one who has been so kind to me? Can it be right for me to do it?"

CHAPTER XVII.

TERRIBLE DISCLOSURE.

OUR young friend had not answered these inquiries to his own satisfaction, when his attention was arrested by hearing the door softly open. He started forward just in time to see Mr. Bidwell's face peering anxiously around the store.

"Why, did I frighten you?" he exclaimed, in a loud, cheerful tone, shutting the door, and to Antonio's surprise, locking it after him.

"Writing, hey?" he added, glancing over the lad's shoulder. "Here, let me show you a better way to make your D's; yours are too stiff." Then taking the keys of the safe from the desk, said, "a cup of tea has set my head right; now I must make up for lost time."

He went into the counting-room, unlocked

the safe, took out a large book, and began to figure up one of the long columns.

"There can be nothing wrong about that," said Antonio to himself, after having reluctantly watched him. He wrote a line and then glanced again. Mr. Bidwell's face was very much flushed, as he was striving to erase some of the figures with a piece of India rubber. This done, as it appeared to his satisfaction, he tried the pen already in the holder, replaced it with a new one, and then with great care wrote other figures in the place of them.

His manner was such that a suspicion flashed upon the youth that all was not right. Catching up his copy book, he walked quickly into the counting-room, where he could satisfy himself more fully.

His entrance started his companion, who asked sharply, "what do you want?" but instantly changed his tone, and said in a lively voice, as Antonio held out his book,

"Yes, that's better; you improve wonderfully."

Almost immediately he returned the books to the safe, and, whistling a merry tune, was going out, but stopped to add, "My little wife wonders you don't call upon her ; she's almost jealous, she hears me talk so much about you. And, by the way," he added in an indifferent tone, you needn't mention that I came back to-night. If my head hadn't ached so hard, I could have done it all up before I left."

Antonio was delighted that he did not wait for a reply. He was conscious of looking very much confused, and became so much troubled at the bare idea of his friend's dishonesty, that he abruptly put up his writing, and returned home.

" You aren't a bit pleasant, to-night," exclaimed Beatrice, after having in vain tried to rouse her young friend from his reverie. " Mother said we might take a walk with you."

" Well, come now; and we'll just have time," he cried, springing up; " come, I'd rather walk."

But not even in the busy streets, with the lively children chattering like magpies, could he keep his thoughts from Mr. Bidwell. His suspicions once aroused, it was natural for him to attribute the evidently disturbed state of the merchant, and the anxious scrutiny of the head clerk to the same individual. He returned from the common, left the twins in the court, and pursued his way to the evening school; but though he strove to confine his attention, his mind continually wandered, and at last, he begged to be excused from his lesson, and returned to his own room.

Here he found relief in prayer for his friend and for himself, and finally dropped into an unquiet slumber, to dream of danger, thieves and murder.

At the usual hour he took the keys, unlocked the store, and putting on an old coat kept for the purpose, proceeded to sweep and dust as usual. He had scarcely begun his duties, however, when Mr. Norton and Mr. Cruiker entered.

He cast down his eyes, and looked so much like a person detected in guilt, that they both regarded him with surprise. They went toward the counting-room, and he presently heard them talking earnestly, but could distinguish nothing except the words, from his employer, "No, no; impossible. He has too much religious principle."

"Antonio," called out the merchant, "come in here a minute, Mr. Cruiker wants to ask you a question."

"Did Mr. Bidwell come back after I left?" inquired the clerk.

"Yes, sir!" was the almost inaudible reply. He cast an appealing glance toward his employer, as he said in an excited tone, "I would rather do anything, sir, than to — It may be nothing, but it would seem like accusing him. He's been very friendly, sir."

"I respect your scruples, my young fellow," responded the merchant, gazing upon the flushed, agitated countenance before him, and I believe we may trust you so far as to say that

there has been some underhand work going on for several weeks, perhaps months. Large sums of money are wholly unaccounted for. We have reluctantly been compelled to suspect Bidwell. We wish to give him the benefit of any doubts that may arise. But for his sake as well as ours, we must put the matter beyond doubt, and without delay. I do not insist here upon your evidence, for your reluctance to speak proves that you know something ; but you have it in your power to do me great service, and perhaps to prevent Bidwell's dishonesty from becoming public."

"I will do anything, say anything, to prevent that, sir," eagerly responded Antonio. "I mean anything that is right."

He then repeated what he had witnessed the preceding evening, and was obliged to confess that the clerk had appeared excited and unnatural.

With a deep sigh, Mr. Norton said, "Say nothing of what has passed. Now you may return to your duties."

“This is terrible,” he exclaimed, as his clerk, having compared the entries of the preceding day with a copy he had made for the purpose, found the attempt to defraud him of more than one hundred dollars. The figures were so carefully altered, that unless they had been looking for a change, they never would have suspected one.

“This is proof beyond a doubt,” rejoined Mr. Cruiker. “All is now accounted for. He was tempted to extravagance by his desire to marry a city belle. Their expenses for board, I am told, are twenty dollars a week, and his furniture cost him a thousand dollars, not half of which is paid for.”

“From my soul I pity him,” said the merchant, in a feeling tone. “He will be thrown into prison, and his prospects ruined forever.”

“He should have thought of that before,” remarked the clerk, gravely.

“I wish my father were alive to relieve me of this responsibility,” murmured Mr. Norton, after a distressing pause. “I would freely for-

give the injury he has done me, if I could hope to reclaim him. And his young wife, too. How terribly she will feel this disgrace!"

"I should pity her more," returned the other, gravely, "if she had not led him into debt by her extravagant folly. He, himself, told me that she would not be married unless they could board at a hotel and live in style. Why, she gave a hundred dollars for little nick-nacks to put on her *étagère*, and when her husband had not a cent beside his salary to depend upon."

"She had nothing of her own, I think."

"I understood Bidwell an aunt presented her with a couple of hundred dollars, to buy her wedding clothes with. The aunt she's lived with since her father failed."

"Poor fellow, this will be a terrible day for him."

It was now nearly seven, and they left the store together, Antonio hurrying away, too, to his breakfast.

At the usual hour Mr. Bidwell made his ap-

pearance, and as neither Mr. Norton nor the head clerk were in, commenced giving Antonio an account of the play he had witnessed the previous evening.

In the midst of it, however, David called the lad to take some goods from a truck at the door, and never had he more willingly obeyed.

Presently an early customer called, whom the salesman took up stairs, and when he came down, his employer and Mr. Cruiker were in the counting-room.

"Mr. Norton wishes ~~to~~ speak with you," said one of the younger clerks, coming toward him. "Porter, will you wait on any customer who inquires for him?"

Bidwell darted a keen, angry look upon his companion, grew white about the mouth, but instantly rousing himself, walked across the store, his hat set jauntily on the side of his head, humming a line from a favorite opera.

His countenance changed quickly, however, when he saw his kind, generous employer, sitting in an attitude of distress, his face conceal-

ed by his handkerchief, while Cruiker, on his high stool, looked the picture of stern rebuke.

"Close the door and lock it," said Mr. Norton, in a trembling voice, casting a sorrowful glance upon his young salesman.

"I am about to perform one of the most painful duties of my life," said he, at length, breaking a silence which, to one at least, of the party, had become intolerable; to accuse one whose social qualities called forth my affection, whose business talents commanded my respect; to accuse you, Henry Bidwell, of dishonesty in your dealings with me; of defrauding me, as nearly as we can ascertain, of sums amounting to one thousand and ninety dollars."

It was painful to witness the change in the appearance of the salesman, while his employer, in the saddest of voices, brought this charge against him. On first being addressed, he stood upright with a defiant air, as if he resented the idea of being called to account for his actions, but as the gentleman finished, he

grew alarmingly pale, and staggered against the wall for support.

Without a word Mr. Cruiker arose from his stool, and pushed it toward him.

"I am glad to find you do not aggravate your crime by denying it," said the merchant, gravely.

"Surely," faltered the poor man, "you wont take this distress as a confession of my guilt. Your charge is so sudden and unexpected, it unnerves me." He wiped the cold moisture from his forehead, his hand trembling so that he could scarcely control it.

"Pshaw!" muttered the clerk, indignantly; but Mr. Norton motioned him to be silent, while he replied, "No, Bidwell; it is far from me to wish to take advantage of you in any way. God knows how willingly I would believe you to be innocent, but I hope and expect you to make a full and frank confession of your guilt."

"Guilt, sir," making a sickly attempt at a smile. "You do not really believe it. I must be dreaming."

"No, sir ! You're not dreaming," exclaimed Mr. Cruiker, in a thundering voice. "You are a rascal, sir, a thief, a villain ; worse than even I thought you. You are not dreaming, but you will wish you were, for in ten minutes you will be on your way to jail. You have made false entries in the books ; only last night you altered this," laying his hand on the open page ; "but fortunately I had made a true copy to correct it by. Yes, sir, we have abundant proof of your guilt ; and now, what have you to say for yourself ?"

"Mercy, only mercy," cried the young man, falling on his knees, before his employer. "I confess all."

He groaned and seemed about to faint.

"Water," cried Mr. Norton, "he's going."

Mr. Cruiker brought a glass of water, held it to the pale lips, and then sprinkled a handful in his face.

The merchant offered to help him to a chair, but he refused ; "no," he cried, "on my knees let me tell you my temptation and my crime."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PENITENT SALESMAN.

IT was the too frequent story of a man endeavoring to gratify his wife by making a false show of wealth. Fully conscious of his value as a salesman, he had readily convinced himself that his employer would not release him were he to demand twice the salary he now received. From one step to another he had rushed madly on, growing of late so unhappy under the constant lashings of a guilty conscience, that he had scarcely cared how soon the end came.

“Now,” he exclaimed, casting a look of agonized remorse on his employer, “though I am a condemned thief, a villain of the deepest dye, since I have abused the most generous kindness, yet I am happier, I can breathe more

freely than I have done for three months. Do what you will with me. Cast me into prison, I deserve it all. But, oh," he added, with a burst of passionate grief, "for the sake of my wife — my poor Emma, if I might be pardoned, the services of a whole life should convince you I am not ungrateful."

Mr. Norton glanced into the face of Mr. Cruiker, who, though not unmoved, preserved an air of the most unrelenting sternness.

"If you could know," added the young man, his lips quivering, as he wiped the big drops of perspiration from his face, "if you could imagine how much I have suffered, how I loathe the very sight of the costly furniture for which I have perilled my soul, you would pity me. Oh, I would willingly exchange it for the stone walls of a prison, if I could get back my peace of mind."

His face turned to such a deathly hue that even the stern Cruiker was moved.

"He must be carried home," said Mr. Norton, as with a groan the poor man fell back

against the wall. "We can do nothing more to-day."

Antonio was sent to call a carriage, but when Bidwell revived sufficiently to speak, he refused to return to the hotel, saying, "I had rather go to prison at once."

After some further consultation, they ascertained that Mrs. Bidwell had gone into the country to pass a few days, and that it was probable the young man could return to the room he had occupied in a private boarding-house. Mr. Cruiker finally accompanied him to this place, having been requested to inform the landlord that he would not return to the hotel. There were two weeks of board still due, beside the debt for furniture.

Softened and deeply moved by the poor criminal's touching tone of humility, Mr. Cruiker promised to settle up his affairs as favorably as possible, and either to see or to write to Mrs. Bidwell of the distressing change in her prospects.

Before they reached the house, the salesman

grew so ill that it was with reluctance the clerk left him long enough to summon a physician. Not understanding this was his intention, the young man caught his hand as he was about to leave the room, and exclaimed with a burst of feeling. " You despise me, Cruiker, but not half so much as I despise myself. If I had been told six months ago that I should have been a thief, I should have cried out, ' Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing? ' "

" You trusted in your own strength," answered the other," trying to conceal how much he pitied his companion.

It was nearly an hour before he returned with a physician, who, knowing nothing of the circumstances, pronounced him in a dangerous condition.

Mr. Cruiker proposed to send at once for his wife.

" No, no ! " said he, becoming greatly excited, " it would kill me."

" I shall soon be gone," he said, after the physician had taken his leave ; " if Mr. Nor-

ton can forgive me for the sake of my poor disgraced wife, I shall bless him with my dying breath."

"But you are too ill to be left here alone," responded the other, wishing to change the subject.

"If you can spare him, let Antonio come, perhaps he may do my soul good."

For several days and nights the young Italian watched by his sick friend with unremitting attention. The physician came once, twice, thrice in a day, but gave no hope of his recovery. The patient lay most of the time either stupid or raving in delirium. Antonio tended him, watched and prayed. Twice while pleading for the poor guilty sufferer, for the life of his body, and the life of his soul, he heard a whispered "*Amen.*" And once when he was bending over him thinking him asleep, he saw the pale lips move, and could just distinguish the words, "help—Lord."

Mr. Norton came frequently to the chamber; but never in sight of the sufferer. Another

person came too. A female figure closely veiled, stifling her sobs in her handkerchief, was often found at the door of the sick and apparently dying man. She watched for the appearance of the doctor, and waylaid him as he was going down the stairs, always with one question trembling on her tongue, "Will he live?"

Mr. Cruiker had obtained her address from a servant at the hotel, and then Mr. Norton went to see her. Surprise, grief, horror, and self-reproach by turns filled her mind as she listened to the terrible story, related in the softest terms by the kind employer.

Then, true woman that she was, she started up, declaring her determination to go immediately to her husband. Once in the city the physician positively forbade anything that would excite his patient, so she passed her time at the door of his chamber, listening to the slightest sound, or in her own room at her aunt's, to whose house she had returned, praying God to spare his life, and to forgive her for leading

him into extravagance which tempted him to sin.

At last the crisis came. The faithful physician sat by his side counting his pulse, while Antonio was on his knees, his face buried in the counterpane, while his hand clasped that of the sick man.

Just at midnight, after a long drawn sigh from the sufferer, he opened his eyes, in which the light of reason again dawned.

Antonio sprang joyfully to his feet, but the doctor motioned silence, while he administered a powerful tonic. He lay perfectly still for a time, and then again opened his eyes and fixed them on the youth before him.

"Thank God ;" he whispered, feebly, "He has had mercy on me."

Once more Antonio bowed himself in grateful thanks to God. The physician knelt, too.

"Let me hear," lisped the sufferer, as his voice was not audible.

In that solemn scene the fear of man was taken away, and the young, unlearned, but re-

joying lad, poured out his heart before God. By the abounding riches of his grace, by his long suffering kindness, by the merits of a crucified Saviour, he besought his heavenly Father, that he who had been saved from the jaws of death, might be pardoned all his offences, giving up his own righteousness might be clothed in the righteousness of Christ, and that he might spend the remainder of his life in loving and serving his Redeemer.

Two days later, the patient, clasping the hand of his wife, expressed a trembling hope that God had indeed forgiven his sins.

Antonio had informed him from Mr. Norton that his wife knew all that had passed, that she was willing to endure privation and poverty with him, until every cent he had taken was refunded ; so though the doctor had forbidden for the present, the discussion of every exciting topic, he knew by her fond attentions, and her soothing words of love, that in his disgrace she would still cling to him.

In the mean time, the merchant, and his

clerk had many earnest discussions respecting future arrangements for the salesman, now that God in mercy seemed ready to spare his life. Both of them had been agreeably surprised by the acknowledged determination on the part of the young and beautiful bride, to support herself, either by giving lessons in music, or teaching a class in French in one of the city schools.

Mr. Norton's kind heart prompted him not only to forgive the offence, as he hoped God had forgiven it, but also the debt.

Mr. Cruiker persisted in saying the last would be an injury to the young man. He had prevailed upon the furniture dealer to take back the expensive articles purchased at his wareroom, though at a considerable discount, and after paying all his debts there was still between one and two hundred dollars left.

"But what can he do?" the clerk asked, "what will support him?"

"I shall give him his former place," replied Mr. Norton, firmly. "Even if there were no

other reason, the pleadings of Antonio would have caused me to do it. He considers him a humbled and renewed man. I believe, under God, he has been the instrument of his conversion. I could not recommend him to another, without relating these facts which I wish to have forgotten ; and without a character from me, he could not hope to succeed in this city."

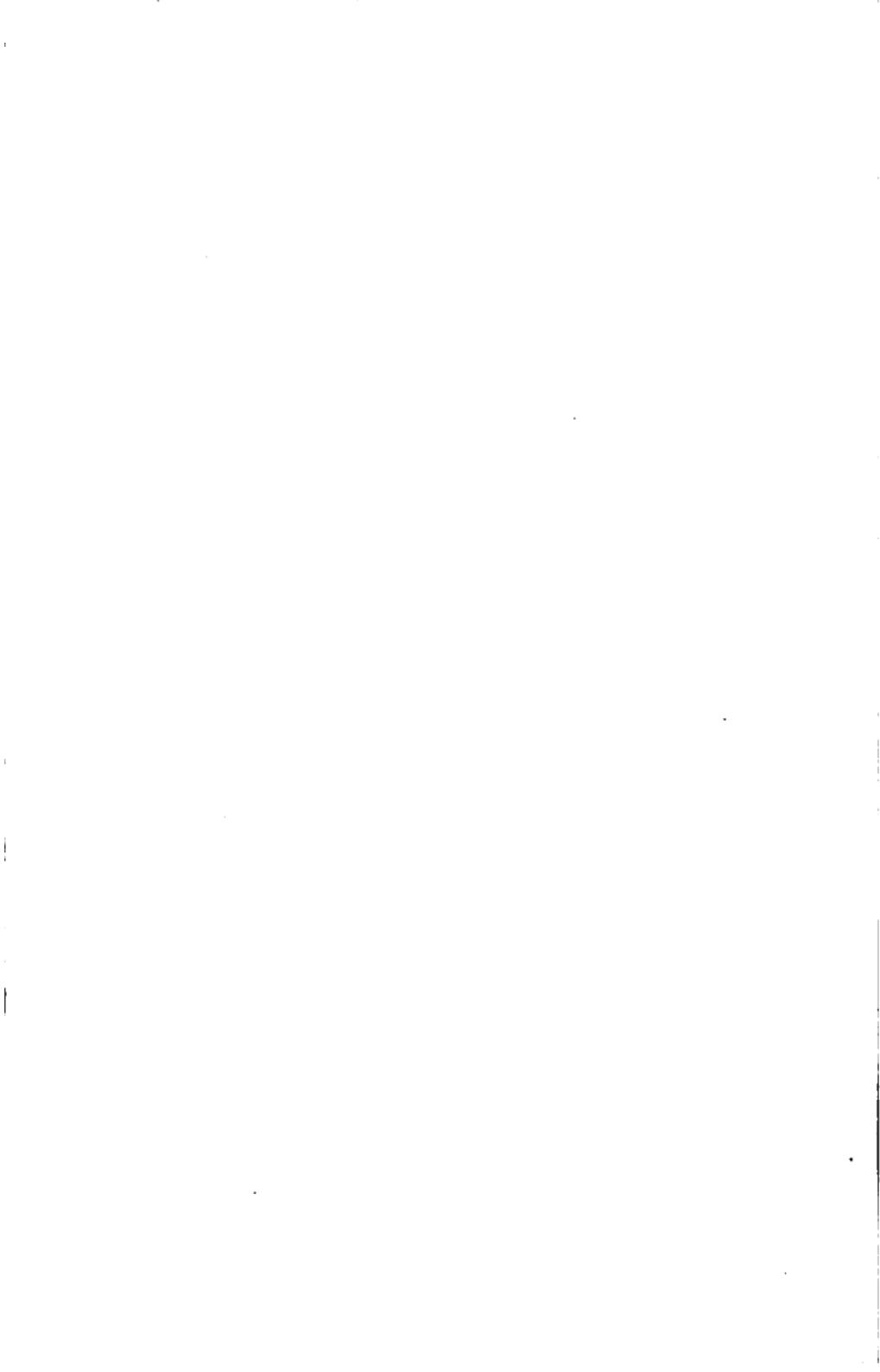
Mr. Cruiker walked to the window, used his handkerchief vigorously, then came back, grasped his employer's hand, saying in a husky voice, "I am convinced your father would have done the same."

Henry Bidwell wept like a child when informed of the intention of the noble merchant. "If God gives me the ability and strength to serve you as I wish," he sobbed out, "you shall never regret this."

"You have a staunch friend in our young Italian," rejoined Mr. Norton, when the other became more calm. "Before he was aware of my intention toward you, he came to me to plead your cause, offering to withdraw his little



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patrimony from the bank in order to refund me for any loss."

The poor man hid his face in his hands, his whole form shaking with agitation.

"Oh, how little I have deserved such kindness!" he exclaimed at last; "I owe to that youth, to his prayers, and labors for me, more than I can ever repay."

"One thing more before I go," said the merchant, rising, "With the exception of Antonio, no one suspects what has occurred. Now good bye, get well as fast as you can, for we need you, and remember, that I shall trust you as fully as ever I did."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PRAYER MEETING.

TWO months later Antonio called upon his friend Mr. Bidwell, who with his wife, was boarding in the family of her aunt. The young man had invited them to go with him to the evening service in the Bethel Chapel, and had now come for the purpose of accompanying them there. Though he had parted from the salesman only an hour or two before, he was received with almost boistrous cordiality. The young host led him toward the fire and seated him by force in the most comfortable chair, saying, "I hope you're in season, for it takes Emma some little time to put on her fixings."

"Nonsense," replied the little wife, blushing, as she ran into the small room adjoining.

"Antonio," said the man, when they were

alone, "I've set my heart on something which I can't accomplish without your aid."

"And you're pretty sure of that, I suppose," replied the youth, smiling.

"Why, yes; since Mr. Norton and Cruiker approve it."

"What is it, then?"

"You know Mrs. Raleigh, Emma's aunt, took us here for company, not wishing to make anything out of us. I've told her all," he added, his voice trembling, "and she approves of Emma's teaching and all that sort of thing. We were to pay six dollars a week for both of us, washing included—Emma does the ironing—never saw a shirt done up in her life, before, and just look at my collar; it shines like laundry work. But last week she said, aunt Raleigh, I mean, 'that her neice takes so much care from her, starching her caps and fixings, that she sha'n't take anything for her board.' Now, I've thought what a fine time we would have if you'd come here, too. There's a little room over the one we have.

where you could be as snug as a whistle, and you'd only have to pay two dollars and three-quarters a week. Then you'd have a home with us, and —" he stopped, rather embarrassed.

Antonio smiled and shook his head. There were reasons in favor of such a plan, but he feared it would interrupt his usefulness among his country people.

"The fact is," urged Mr. Bidwell, with increasing earnestness, "Cruiker has been to see Lizette, as you call her, in disguise, and the report he brought back was not favorable to her neatness."

"But I have a room to myself, and take my meals at a restaurant."

"Where I have no doubt they cost you as much as you'd have to pay here, and there's your room besides."

"I should be obliged to keep that at any rate; I hold my school there."

"Oh, we could manage that somehow. Mr. Norton, and Emma, and all of us, think it

would be better for you to have a regular home in a good family; but here comes the pudding-maker," as Emma attired with extreme simplicity, entered. "Only think," he added in a whisper, "she says she never was so happy in all her life."

"No, indeed," she rejoined, with a merry laugh, "not half so happy, and I think of preparing a lecture to young ladies, about to be married, upon the importance of beginning at the lower round of the ladder, and mounting up, instead of beginning at the top as we did. I'm ashamed when I think how foolish and thoughtless I was."

"It's time to go this minute," broke in Mr. Bidwell. "Come."

"You go to Father Taylor's, every Monday evening, I believe, Antonio?" remarked Mrs. Bidwell, as they walked along.

"Yes; since Mr. Evans keeps only four evenings a week. The Monday evening is the best, I believe."

"Why?"

"Father Taylor says, because it's fresh from the holy day."

"What would the sailors do without that man?"

"I can hardly imagine. They cannot feel as if they were speaking right, without his hearty nod of approbation.

When they entered the room, Mr. Bidwell had not the most distant idea of taking any part in the meeting; but so earnestly were his feelings appealed to in the humble confessions of the warm-hearted sons of Neptune, that almost before he was aware of it, he commenced addressing them.

"I came here to-night a stranger to you all, at the request of one to whom this vestry is almost the dearest spot on earth — his spiritual birth-place; but I do not feel like a stranger, now. Here on the right side of me, clasping the callous, bronzed hand of the sailor who had last spoken, is a man whom I claim for my brother, the child of my Father in heaven; and there in yonder seat, is a brother dearer still,

one who says he has been the chief of sinners, and has reason to sing the loudest praise to redeeming love. Oh, my dear friend ! you have been sunk in sin, if your guilt has indeed, been greater than mine : but I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, that he has pulled my feet out of the miry clay, and put a new song in my mouth, even praise, everlasting praise to my God."

" How refreshing those words are," said Father Taylor, looking round upon his children, with his beaming smile. " We welcome you, brother."

A colored man now commenced the familiar hymn in which all joined :

Oh, how happy are they,
Who their Saviour obey,
And have laid up their treasure above;
Tongue can never express
The sweet comfort and peace
Of a soul in it earliest love."

" One verse more, brother — hearty," was the response from the pulpit.

When this was concluded a man who, from his rich brogue, seemed to claim Erin as the land of his birth, arose, and made some animated and interesting remarks, exhorting all his friends to improve the present hour for the salvation of their souls.

His tone was so earnest and his utterance so rapid, that some young girls who were present, and not being able to understand him, began to laugh.

Father Taylor, whose eyes seemed to be everywhere, noticed that this levity attracted the attention of the sailors, and addressing them in an apologizing tone, said, pointing to the girls, "My sons, excuse their impoliteness in laughing ; I suppose they have never been to sea."

After the meeting was closed, Father Taylor came from the pulpit, and beckoned to Antonio to come nearer, and introduce his friends ; but the crowd around the good man was so dense, it was some time before they could draw near.

A part of these hardy sons of the sea, had

just landed, and pressed forward to clasp once more, the hand of the good father, whose prayers, as they told him, they were sure, followed them across the deep water, to distant ports. Others were just about to embark, and came to get a good word to carry with them, and to say farewell. Others still waited for an opportunity to speak a word for a comrade whom they were about to leave exposed to land sharks, and all the dangers of the shore.

But, at length, our friends made their way to the desk, where the fatherly manner in which the good man clasped Emma's tiny hand, and pressed it in both his, quite won her heart.

"I want you to be my father," she said, in her winning way, fixing her dewy eyes on his.

"Yes, yes, dear, so you shall; but I trust you've got a Father up there, too," pointing upward.

"Oh! Henry," she exclaimed, when they were in the street, "that was the best meeting I ever attended. How earnest the sailors looked; the big tears rolling down their

cheeks, and dropped on their lap, without their knowing it."

"Yes," he rejoined, "that was one great peculiarity in the audience ; they seemed awake and alive, listening with all their hearts, to the precious words. Such hearers must inspire any preacher."

"I never saw a man asleep there," remarked Antonio.

"They've no chance," added Mr. Bidwell, laughing. "Father Taylor would perceive the first symptoms of drowsiness, and either request some of his sons to provide a couch for the sleeper, or give his chorister a hint to strike up one of their inspiring tunes."

The proposal of his friends, to take up his abode with them, occupied our hero, until he reached home. He found Lizette sitting in a listless manner, in her room — the woman who lived with her, and the children, having long since retired to rest. She seemed offended, that he had been out so late, and began loudly to reproach him with having forsaken them for new friends.

Antonio endeavored to pacify her by talking of the children, and at last, as she would not listen to, or be soothed by what he said, took his Bible from his pocket, and began to read to himself.

"There it is again," she said, "you once read to me, but now you only read to yourself."

"I will read to you with pleasure," he began, turning at once from his place, in course to the account of the man whom Jesus cured of his blindness.

"I would like, also, to say my prayers here," he said, when he had concluded the chapter, "that is, if you are willing."

"Is it the one you teach the children?"

"I will say that, if you will repeat it with me."

They repeated, in unison, the Lord's prayer, which she had heard the twins say so often, that she had committed it to memory, and then taking her hand cordially he said, "Now, Lizzette, say, will you always be as good and kind as you have been this last half hour."

" You don't always read, and say prayers," she answered, evasively.

" I pray for you every morning, and every night," said the youth, " for you and the dear children."

Bidding her good night, he retired to his room, little imagining that the Spirit of the Lord was working upon the heart of the poor, ignorant woman, he had left, and that his simple, but fervent petitions, in her behalf, were destined to cause her a sleepless night.

He lay awake for a long time, revolving in his mind the project of seeking a new home, and at last resolved to leave the decision to his kind friend, Mrs. Murray.

CHAPTER XX.

CONCLUSION.

MRS. Murray had not been an uninterested observer of all that had passed, as related to the welfare of her protege. She made frequent inquiries of Mr. Norton, and was delighted to hear how rapidly Antonio had won his confidence and respect.

“There is the making of a noble man in him,” David often remarked to his employer, and Mrs. Murray agreed with him.

“If it were not for his plan to return to Italy,” said Mr. Norton, one day, “I should consent to Bidwell’s urgent request, and allow him to make a salesman of the youth. He insists that Antonio would make a capital fellow for trade.”

“I hardly think,” returned the lady, “that

he has any definite plan. He was discouraged at the idea of remaining here to be an organ grinder, and the remembrance of his early days, when he lived upon a small farm with his parents, induced a wish to return."

"He told me that his father carried grapes, and other fruits, to market."

"Yes, and macaroni, and vegetables already cooked. These he carried in panniers, on a donkey. Antonio remembers riding home when the load had been disposed of. He says the cottage they lived in, was built of rough stone and mortar, and covered with luxuriant vines. Then they used to sell goat's milk, driving the creature to the door of the customer."

"By which means they would be sure of the genuine article," suggested the gentleman, with a laugh.

"Antonio thinks his mother was very handsome. He says she used to spin as she went from one part of the village to the other. They have a small instrument for the purpose,

which they carry, with ease, on their arm. Occasionally, he accompanied her, and was allowed sometimes to stop at the vineyards, and pick grapes, at four cents a day."

"I imagine, few of them are so industrious. The Italians here generally prefer to beg than to work for their living."

"Oh!" he says, "that is the case at home, too; most of them will not try to earn anything, and even though provisions are so cheap, a bottle of wine only costing two cents, and a loaf of bread one cent, yet they will not work to earn it. Once a week, in the village where he lived, the priest gave the poor a dinner of soup, when they rushed with their pans, to get a supply. Some were so destitute that they had not even a pan to eat it in, and were obliged to use clam shells."

"Do they carry round organs there?"

"He says he never saw one. Maurice Ritti told him they used the violin, guitar, mandolin and harp, going around to serenade people as the organ grinders do here. But these in-

struments require a great deal of practice, and they find it easier to turn the crank of a barrel organ."

" When I first talked with him at my store, he told me that he had some money, with which he hoped to re-purchase the cottage and land, where his father had lived. After a few years in active business, he would scarcely be satisfied to return to that mode of life. He might aim at something higher."

" If he returns now I think it would be to remove Lizette and her children from the influences around them here. The mother is, I fear, too indolent to be reclaimed ; but the children may be. Madelina and Beatrice are very attractive and bright little girls. Antonio told me frankly, and as coolly as possible, that he supposed he should marry Madelina ; he used to prefer Beatrice, but she is too fiery.

" How old is the intended bride ? " inquired the gentleman, laughing heartily.

" In her eighth year, I think ; but the Italians are betrothed and married at a very early age.

I went once to their court with Father Rainoni, and he pointed out one girl scarcely more than twelve, who was engaged to be married soon. She is in Antonio's school ; the old priest shook his head as he told me, and said, ' she is too young, it is not best.' He encourages them all to go back to Italy."

" I often hear Antonio speak of him."

" Yes, he has been a good friend to the youth, who regards him truly with filial affection.

It was some days after this conversation, that Mr. Bidwell made the proposal to Antonio, to become a member of their family ; but until the close of the week he had no opportunity to consult his friend.

She perceived at once, that the change would be greatly beneficial to the formation of gentlemanly habits ; but not being aware of the strong motive for gratitude Mr. Bidwell possessed, was rather puzzled to account for his extreme interest in her protege. However, after talking with the lad for an hour, she advised him to remove his furniture to his new home,

but retain his chamber for the use of his Sabbath school, from which she hoped great good would result.

Without proposing a direct question, she ascertained that his project for returning to his native land was still indefinite, and far in the future. He was too much pleased with his probable advancement in the store, to wish for anything better at present.

Nothing now remained, but for him to inform Lizette of the change he was about to make, and this Mr. Bidwell urged him to do without delay.

He had continued to read and pray with her, and chose the time to tell her one night, just after these exercises. To his surprise, she did not burst out upon him in a passion as she had heretofore done, but only said in a desponding tone, "I supposed you would do so. Soon you will forget us entirely. I shall take the children and go back to Italy. Maurice and Terese are going in the spring ; I shall go with them."

He could not conceal his surprise at this sudden announcement, though he had occasionally anticipated such an event, and it was sometime before he could find voice to say, in a sad tone, "I can't think what I should do without the children."

The more he thought of it, however, the more he was convinced that it would be wise for her to take advantage of her brother-in-law's going, in order to make the purchase for her, and when he found it was approved by Father Rainoni he opposed it no longer.

Beatrice caught at the idea, and could think and talk of nothing else, but Madelina, when she found that Antonio would not accompany them, grieved herself sick.

Maurice did not expect to sail for several months, and in the meantime our hero determined to exert all his influence to bring them to the knowledge of the Saviour.

The Sabbath school had increased from sixteen to twenty-five scholars, which, even though all other furniture was removed from the room,

filled it to overflowing. Beside these regular scholars, many of the parents crowded to the passage way, or sat on the stairs where they could listen to the singing, and parts of the lessons which were repeated in concert.

"Antonio," exclaimed Mrs. Bidwell, gaily, one night as they were seated at the tea table, "I have waited very patiently four weeks, for you to invite me to your Mission School."

"I'm sure Mrs. Murray would be pleased not only to have you go, but to have you take a class," he replied warmly.

"Nonsense, I mean your Mission School in North Street."

"But the exercises there are all in Italian."

"Ah! I didn't think of that; but no matter, I want to go."

The youth's face flushed. The idea of curious spectators was not a pleasant one.

"I'm afraid your appearance would distract the attention of the scholars."

Company coming in at this moment, the lady arose and left the room; but she had not aban-

doned her project. In the course of the week, she ascertained the time the school would be in session, determined to present herself there, when it was too late for him to object.

Antonio had now been a member of their family for a month. During this period he had rendered himself a favorite not only with Mr. and Mrs. Bidwell, but with Mrs. Raleigh, her aunt. His consistent, earnest piety, was most favorable in its influence on the young salesman, who regarded him with the affection of a brother.

During the months which followed, this gentleman's conduct was so exemplary, that even Mr. Cruiker was convinced that in this instance Mr. Norton had acted wisely, in preferring mercy to justice.

The influence of an educated and refined lady like Mrs. Bidwell, was of great service to the young man. Like a sister, she interested herself in all that concerned him, assisted him in his studies, and pointed out the trifling faults which the peculiar circumstances of his early

life had rendered inevitable. Both she and her husband often accompanied him to the meetings at the Bethel Chapel, where they were sure of a cordial welcome from Father Taylor. Through him, too, she made the acquaintance of Father Rainoni, whom she much admired, not only for his interest in their mutual friend, but on account of his simple warm hearted efforts for the good of his country people.

It was a pleasant Sabbath morning in January, when having prevailed on her husband to accompany her to the Italian school, she called in Mount Vernon street for Ida Murray, as she had promised, and then directed her steps to the court so often mentioned.

As they passed through the alley, the young companion pressed closely to her side, fearing lest some of the many loungers might address her.

Mr. Bidwell readily ascertained the door which led to Antonio's school. At the foot of the staircase, a woman began to talk very fast and earnestly, mingling with her Italian a few

English words, by which they understood that she would summon Antonio Lambert, to come to them below.

But Mrs. Bidwell, hearing a sound of many voices repeating a prayer in unison, put her finger on her lip, and making a motion of silence, began cautiously to mount the stairs.

The upper hall was filled with men and women, quietly intent on what was passing within the room. They made way, however, at the sight of the strangers, so that the latter could hear without being seen by the members of the school.

The voice of the young teacher, was at this moment earnestly addressing the pupils in a tone so persuasive, they could not doubt he was telling them of the love of Christ.

Looking through the crack, Mrs. Bidwell could see a tear start in the eyes of one and another among the group, their attitude betokening the most devout attention.

Questions and responses followed, occupying half an hour, when singing and prayer closed the exercises for the day.

As soon as the school was dismissed, the scholars flocked around their teacher, and in the midst of this, the stranger's quietly took their leave, without making their presence known to their friend.

"I am humbled and ashamed of my want of zeal in the service of my Saviour, remarked Mr. Bidwell as they were reviewing the events of the day. To see that young disciple, working for God, in the face of every discouragement, while I who have such reason to be earnest in his cause, I, who have such reason for gratitude to Him, am idly folding my hands ; the thought of it, makes me hide my face in confusion.

"Yes, Emma, this has been a solemn day with me. Ever since we returned from Church I have been communing with my own heart, and have come to a solemn determination, to devote myself heart and soul to the real business of life, to enter the field with our dear Antonio, and strive for a few jewels to wear in my crown, in the last great day of reckoning. You

remember the precious promise," he added, his voice tremulous with emotion, "he that turneth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death and hide a multitude of sins."







